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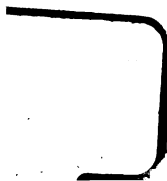
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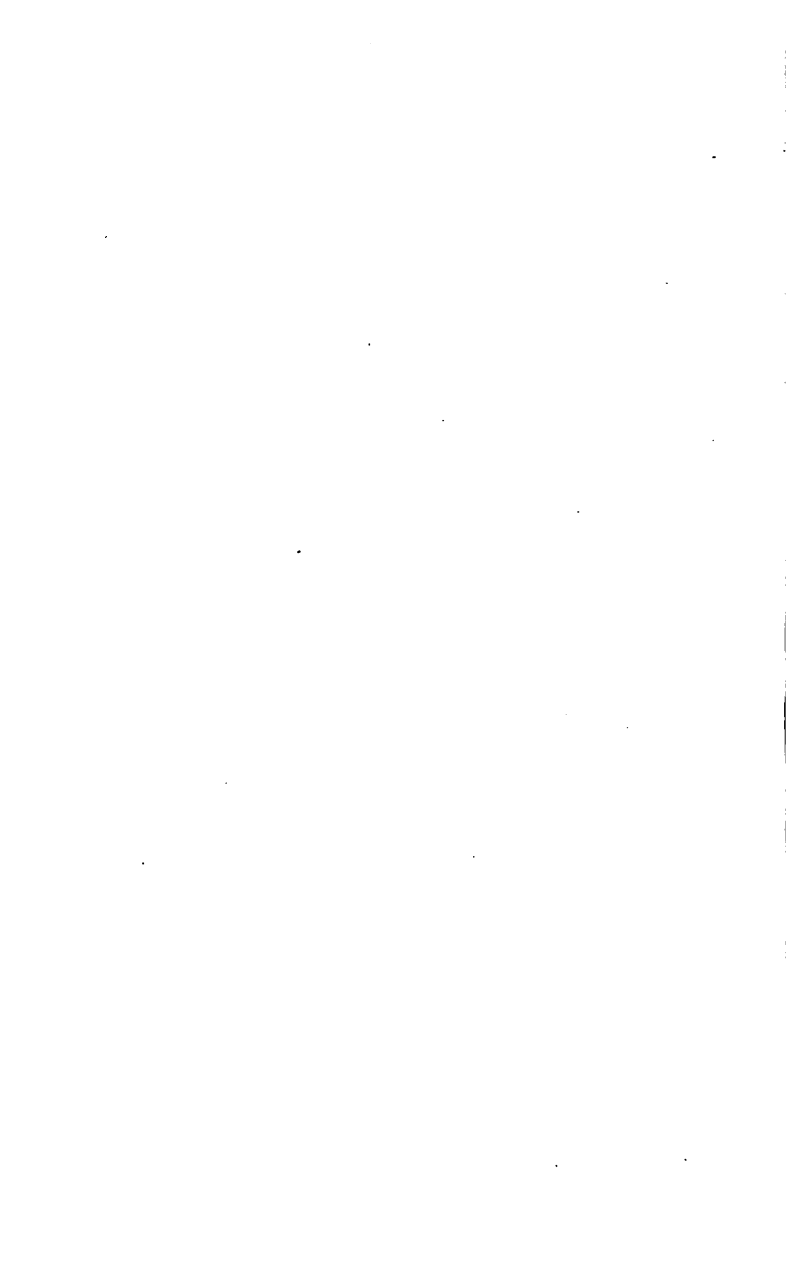
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CHRISTIANITY AND A
PERSONAL DEVIL.



CHRISTIANITY AND A PERSONAL DEVIL

AN ESSAY

BY PATRICK SCOTT



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PREFACE.



MY object in the following work is to examine the passages in the New Testament which bear on the existence of a Devil. As I believe this existence to be clearly proclaimed in the later Christian Scriptures, and, as I assent to the terms "Sacred" or "Inspired Volume" commonly applied to them, I cannot do otherwise than acknowledge the fact of their being a great Evil Power.

My present purpose, however, is not to prove the truth of the religion of Christ, but to show that the belief in a personality of evil forms an essential part of His teaching.

At the same time I cannot flatter myself by supposing that all who may read my book will agree with me, though I hope to secure for it an attentive consideration from those who are both thoughtful and unprejudiced. To such I would say, "If you confess that the Son of God descended to earth to save men from their sins, how do you suppose that such a necessity could arise? Do you allow that the creation of moral man was an im-

perfect work? or, if originally perfect but afterwards corrupted, whence did the corruption spring?" Not surely from the Creator himself; certainly not from the Man himself who was *conceived* in iniquity.

Such phrases as "We are all sinners from the womb—Christ (who, be it remembered, made us) came to redeem our fallen nature;—so stupendous an act as the immolation of incarnate Deity could alone effect this purpose:"—such language, I say, is constantly employed with very little reflection on what it involves. I solicit a hearing from all who deem it desirable to have some understanding of the words they are in the habit of repeating.

The successful temptation of man, by a power which was not of God, is very plainly asserted in the holy writings—plainly, if the description be not considered simply allegorical. Even if it be so, allegories only embody a meaning; and, at all events, we do not, by the above supposition, get rid of the evil which unquestionably exists now, and did not exist at the first in the Biblical Paradise or golden age of Heathenism.

I have not only reviewed the passages in the New Testament which confirm my ideas about the Evil One, but also those points in the nature of man which bear joint testimony to the same.

If Christianity declares that there is a devil, and there be none, how can Christianity be true? I give no heed to the contention that all the numerous portions of

Scripture bearing on the question are merely symbolical ; for what is the worth of a faith which rests on writings which mean what they do not say, and say what they do not mean ?

We may analyze the myths of ancient times, and extract from them an acknowledgment of a Supreme Ruler, the source of knowledge and power, disguised under the emblem of Light, or other material attributes. But these fables were devised by poets ; interpreted in their true sense by the intelligent only ; and misunderstood by the vulgar, or still further corrupted by additions. Now, even if it be granted that in the Old Testament there may be found passages which cannot be interpreted literally, what shall we say of the New, promulgated at a time when the typical worship of old was abolished, and in places where Greek was the general spoken language ? The Gospels professed to set forth an antitypal doctrine, wherein all things had become new, and shadow had brightened into substance. If they do not plainly declare the way of salvation, then are they unfaithful to their promise ; and all that remains is for human learning to grope mid the darkness of metaphor and allegory for some simple truth which the heart of man once understood, but which was obscured by the ingenuity or the ignorance of succeeding ages. What a staff on which to lean when we would turn our steps toward a distant and uncertain Heaven ! I think, however, there is a " more excellent way " by which to escape from an else insu-

perable difficulty, and to confirm, at the same time, a belief in revelation.

Further questions arise, as, for instance—If if there be a devil what must be the essence of his nature, and the degree and duration of his power? It would be hazardous to assert, if he has always existed, that he can ever cease to be: but it is not so difficult to believe that he may eventually live on, “shorn of his beams,” and comparatively powerless for ill. We are not, I trust, forbidden to entertain ideas on phenomena which we do not quite understand even when those ideas rest on a scriptural basis.

I have touched, incidentally, on such points as the nature of the atonement in relation to my present speculations, and have considered how my theory would affect the practical life of men.

I do not claim any novelty for my main idea, but I think I may do so in respect to the use I have made of it. The subject I have been bold enough to discuss being of paramount importance, it must be my fault if I have failed to make it interesting. However, I cherish a hope that what I have written may induce others to devote, amid the distraction of contemporary literature, some little time to the consideration of matters whose scope is co-extensive with eternity.



CHRISTIANITY AND A PERSONAL DEVIL.

“ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with
good.—*Rom. xii. 21.*

CHAPTER I.



SHOULD be sorry to assert, as I am unwilling to believe, that Christianity as an accepted creed is on the wane ; but I doubt not that it is discredited by many intelligent people of the present day—by a greater relative number than was the case, for instance, in the days of Erasmus and the early Reformers. I should wish, however, to remark before proceeding, that the credibility of a religious belief cannot be fairly thought to rise or fall in proportion to the number of those who embrace it or reject it. That number

will be obviously affected by the manners of the times, and the morals as well as the intellectual condition of its followers. They may have more or less regard for exclusive truth ; a greater or less love of pleasure, including a taste for spectacular shows and a gorgeous ceremonial ; a stronger or feebler desire to purchase the indulgence of their sins at the least attainable cost.

I assume then, that a considerable theoretical disbelief in revelation is entertained among thinking men, and carried out in practice by the thoughtless ; and that the fact, however it may be explained, will be granted. There may exist several causes for it, such, for instance, as that Christianity has lost the attraction of novelty ; that it has been long destitute of any confirmatory miracle ; that there has not of late been any great and general persecution for the faith's sake, or any particular endangering of religious liberty, both which events have a strong tendency to awaken zeal and enforce assent.

Another reason may, perhaps, be found in the many religions that divide the Christian world—in those, for instance, which co-exist without blending in Protestant communities.

I here use the word "religions" designedly, for when denominational sectaries wage an internecine fight for their little differences of opinion or organization, these differences assume the proportion of religions. The rule of life among such disputants appears to be, "Love God and hate your neighbour." The hate is sincere and well acted out. The love, if not nominal, is fruitless, if it can be given to the Creator whose nature is incomprehensible, and withheld from the creature whom they have both seen and known. Community of thought and interest may unite men in a political phalanx or a commercial speculation, but not apparently a communion of belief in a God and a Saviour. The colour of a garment, the posture of a suppliant, the niceties of an abstruse formula, are considered as valuable means for securing a salvation which is held to be infinite and eternal. Among the ancient peoples of the East, there is a movement, chiefly one of disruption: old ideas are being cast off before the putting on of new ones. When a spirit of religious inquiry is walking the earth, where should an inquiring mind seek for rest amid the multitudinous jealousies of rival sects? or, if he endeavour

from the potential practice to discover the professed faith, how often will he be startled into unbelief by the divergence between doctrine and deed !

No doubt Christianity, as a general principle, has greatly advanced the civilization and morality of the world ; but the unenlightened and the unthinking base their opinions less on general principles than on individual examples—all that is clear to many an observer is a confused mixture of energy, jealousy, sincerity and uncharitableness. He sees some good and much evil, and is puzzled in his judgment. But a worse result is that a frame of mind is probably generated which is adverse to the exercise of serious thought, or the analysis of phenomena into their causes. Evil abounds—that he can plainly see. To what can it be referred ?—that he disregards ; and carelessness in such matters is equivalent to unbelief.

But among the chief reasons of the unbelief to which I have above alluded may, I am decidedly of opinion, be enumerated the notions held regarding the existence of a great evil being. For example, a recent noble author has published an opinion which may

be presented in the form of a syllogism, as follows :—1. Nobody now believes in the devil. 2. The Evangelists believed in him. 3. Therefore, the Evangelists are unworthy of credit. This reasoning will at once be seen to be logically imperfect ; for, in the first place, it is an unproved assertion that nobody believes in the devil ; and, secondly, were it true, we could not infer from it the certainty of the evil spirit's non-existence. However, I only quote the foregoing opinion to illustrate my own as to the origin of much antichristian scepticism. Doubtless, if one important article of a religious creed be successfully attacked, we are at liberty to disallow the remainder ; and if Christianity imposes on us a belief in an evil power, Christianity would be naturally rejected by all who reject such a belief. Let us examine a little into the grounds of this rejection.

The personality of evil may be honestly denied by many who are not among the vicious, to whom the belief would be a loss of pleasure ; or among the philosophic, to whom it might be a loss of credit ; or among the thoughtless, to whom it would be a loss of ease. But I cannot understand upon what grounds it can

be disallowed by any who are upholders of Scriptural truth. Yet even Lord Lyttelton, in his "Ephemera" (second series), writes thus: "I by no means hold that a belief in a personal evil spirit is vital or essential to the Christian faith." In partial reply to this I might cite the words of the same author, where he writes of a "Scripture of which the more they (that is, good people) are told that it does not mean what it appears to mean, the more they will be bewildered in the use of it." Contenting myself with a request that the reader will confront these statements with the grounds of the condemnation pronounced by the noble writer before quoted, I go on to remark on some of the passages in the New Testament which seem to me to render imperative, on those who accept it as inspired, the belief which I advocate—imperative, at least, if Scripture means what it appears very plainly to mean.

In Luke x. 17, we read, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." If "heaven" be a metaphorical expression for height of power, as will be generally maintained, what is meant by *Satan* falling from that height? Is "Satan" a mere term for human wickedness? If so,

one metaphor is made use of to indicate what happens to something which is expressed by another—a very involved method of teaching important truth. In 2 Cor. xii. 7, St. Paul speaks of being buffeted by a messenger of Satan. A messenger is generally sent by a personal agent, and if by the aid of a wide license we interpret the passage otherwise, shall we say that the Apostle was simply exposed to evil influences?—that is, he was buffeted by a messenger of evil influences, or depraved passions, or bodily infirmity? A very awkward and unsatisfactory mode of expression. In 1 Pet. v. 8 we have, “Your adversary, the devil, walketh about as a roaring lion,” &c. The Rev. Dr. Reville conjectures that the word “devil” here represents the Roman government as prowling about for the destruction of believers. The interpretation of the passage may be stretched to mean this or something else; but is it not more natural to suppose that the term describes the tempter who would lure the disciples to avoid Roman persecution by denying their faith? In the preceding chapter (v. 16) they are told not to mind suffering as *Christians*, and the warning against the devil comes after an injunction to be “sober

and vigilant," lest their "adversary" devour them, *i. e.* overcome their fortitude if they are not watchful against his attacks. It can hardly mean that they should be sober and vigilant lest Rome should persecute them. Rome would not be led to do so on account of their vigilance and sobriety, but by reason of their professing Christianity in opposition to her own celestial hierarchy.

We read in 1 John iii. 8, "The devil sinneth from the beginning: the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." Here we meet with the existence—an existence dating from the beginning—of something whose works Christ came to destroy. It seems more suitable to connect "works" with an intelligent agent than to look on them as the results merely of our evil passions, for in that case Christ would have been incarnate to destroy something in the constitution of the beings whom he was originally deputed to create. Do we dare to say that His creation was imperfect, which it would have been if the lapse of man was simply owing to a cause inherent in, and not extraneous to, the natures of His own fashioning? In Matt. xiii. 39 we read, "The enemy that

sowed them is the devil." How is it that this word "devil" is so often used if it means something different from what it seems so distinctly to mean? Christ had just made use of a parable, and the term "devil" occurs in the interpretation of it. Would He have had recourse to one short parable (for the word in question is such, if it means anything else than devil) in order to explain another? Besides, what are the "tares"? If they represent the evil of our nature, what interpretation can we give to the word "enemy"? Can it be held to mean that the evil passions in our nature sowed the evil therein? Again, Christ says in v. 38, "The tares are the children of the wicked one." This passage may be illustrated by quoting John viii. 44, where He says to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Which is the more natural explanation of such language—to suppose that Christ simply describes His enemies as being wicked because they are wicked, or that He accuses them of a wickedness inspired by an evil being?

Consult Acts v. 3 and x. 38: "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie?" &c.; and "Who (Christ) went about healing all that were

oppressed of the devil." If it was intended in these passages to describe the influence upon others of another being than themselves, what fitter words could be used to carry out the purpose intended? If we wished to assert that an evil power did anything whatever, how could we do so but by saying that Satan, or the devil, or the evil one did it? If to express our ideas we are debarred from using the terms adapted to the object in view, it would be impossible for us to make our meaning understood. To proceed a little further. In Luke xxii. 31 we read, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." What can "Satan" mean here but Satan? Can we say, "your evil passions, or heart, or anything else beside a living personality, hath *desired* to have you that he may *sift* you?" &c. Our evil passions have a sufficiently tight hold on us at present, and cannot possibly be represented as seeking to gain a possession which belongs to them already.

In Luke viii. 12, we find the word "devil" used in a similar manner to that in the passage quoted from the parable of the tares, "Then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts." It would be diffi-

cult to suggest how the action of an intelligent agent could be more fittingly portrayed. The same remark may be made in reference to Luke xiii. 16, "a daughter of Abraham whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years." There seems here an opposition between "Daughter of Abraham" and "Satan," the one representing the good element, the other the bad. If the first title means merely daughter in the flesh, viz. a Jewess, her case, being one of bodily infirmity alone, hardly required the incarnation of a God to deal with it. In John xiv. 30, Christ is represented as saying, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Whoever this prince may be he must surely be a person of influence, and different in nature from the speaker. Moreover the words quoted, "The prince of *this* world cometh," either have no meaning at all, or convey a very momentous one. I would ask any opponent of my opinions to affix a metaphorical interpretation to the sentence, for I confess that I am utterly unable to suggest one.

Other passages might be quoted having reference to the personality of Satan, and the contest between him and the seed of the

woman. But enough, perhaps, have been given to bear out the proposition in the judgment of all who recognize the sacred origin of the Book which contains them. I would, however, in connection with this doctrine, remind inquirers that one of the leading ideas in Scripture is that of a *conflict* from all time (not for all time) between good and evil. The same idea may be traced in the works of all divines, and of the authors of religious books. But these writings possess authority for our present purpose in so far only as they are derived from biblical sources. We will therefore confine our examination to some of the texts which authorized the writers aforesaid to make use of the language which they undoubtedly have done.

As a preliminary remark I would say that the whole scheme of revelation is founded upon a recognized opposition between two principles. Men are everywhere represented as *naturally* inclined to evil, and the Spirit of God as continually striving to bring them back from the service of Baal to that of the only and true Lord. No student of Scripture needs to be reminded how often the Almighty is represented as stretching forth His hands

to a gainsaying and rebellious people ; what a strong leaning this people has towards the worship of strange divinities ; what religious lapses and recoveries are chronicled ; what exhortations and even supernatural means are adopted for keeping them steady in their allegiance to the King who claims them as His own.

From the far distant period when Aaron's rod budded, and was answered by a corresponding miracle on the part of the magicians, to the time when Christ was made perfect by suffering, there is one continuous history of antagonism and discomfiture, of struggle and success. However great was the power of God in the belief of the historians, they clearly delineate the impossibility of becoming just and righteous without effort and perseverance—an effort that occasionally fails and a perseverance that succumbs. In the very prayer which Christ taught His disciples we are enjoined to petition that the kingdom of God may come. It is clear from this that it had not then come—that the rightful Lord had not yet assumed the dominion which was contested with Him by the "Prince of this world," from whom and from whose deeds we ask to be delivered.

Turning to Matt. xii. 30, we find Christ saying, "He that is not with me is against me ;" and in Luke ix. 50, "He that is not against us is for us." From these words we must infer the existence of a conflict of some kind, and that whatever its nature be, a side must be taken ; that neutrality is impossible. In 1 Tim. i. 18, we find the expression, "That thou mightest war a good warfare." In Phil. i. 30, "The same conflict which ye saw in me." In Col. ii. 1, "What great conflict I have for you." In Acts v. 39, "To fight against God." In 1 Tim. vi. 12, "Fight the good fight of faith." In Philip. ii. 20, St. Paul calls Epaphroditus his fellow-soldier. In 2 Tim. iv. 7 he says, "I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course." In 1 Cor. ix. 26, "So fight I not as one that beateth the air." In 2 Tim. ii. 3, &c., "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." In Jude 9, reference is made to "Michael, the Archangel, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses, &c." This passage will perhaps be said to be allegorical, or a fable, and so need not be insisted on.

But these, and such-like texts (not to mention the whole tone of Revelation, which im-

plies a contest involving preparation, and prudence, and fortitude), can hardly be looked upon as merely allegorical, and as meaning that there is good and evil in the world. It needs not such a reiteration of images to tell us that. Nor are the objects to be battled for connected with this world. For in 2 Tim. ii. 4, we have the words, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." And in 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, "I have fought a good fight; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of *righteousness* which the Lord shall give me at *that day*," viz., the day of judgment. And in 1 Tim. vi. 12, it is said, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." Here we have the contest and the crown of success; the one to be carried on in this life, the other to be bestowed in that which has no end. The name "Satan" is interpreted as "adversary" or "enemy," and the whole military language is in conformity with this interpretation.

What, too, is the nature of the opposition likely to be encountered in the struggle? The New Testament does not state this to be a physical warfare against earthly foes, as is plainly evident from the 11th and following

verses of Ephesians vi., "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood (against either an earthly enemy, or our own evil passions), but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *spiritual* wickednesses in high places." The armour is the armour of God—truth, righteousness, and faith; and the antagonism is with the spiritual wickedness in high places, that rules the darkness of the nether world; that is, with him against whose wiles they are cautioned, and who is elsewhere described as a murderer from the beginning, and the father of lies, John viii. 44, &c. The same "spiritual wickedness" is called in 2 Cor. iv. 4, "The God of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Here a most exalted title is given to the personage described, and a power is attributed to him corresponding with the title.

Consult Rom. viii. 7, where it is said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The enmity, then, is of a moral nature; and if the carnally-minded man is an enemy of one being, of whom is he the friend?—for there is

no enmity without a corresponding friendship, either for one's self or for another. Scripture would assert that the alliance is with the person (or thing) that blinded the minds of the sceptics, as before stated. In John xii. 31, the words "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out," show an opposition between the speaker and the prince of the world. The term "prince" applies naturally to a person, and the casting out was to be effected, not by force, persuasive words, or good example, but by the death of him who uttered the sentence, for immediately afterwards he states that when He was lifted up (crucified), He would draw all men unto Him—and away, of course, from the prince of the world. Analogous language is met with in chap. xiv. 30 (already quoted), viz., "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Here "cometh" denotes progressive action, and "hath nothing in me," difference of character. If the language be merely metaphorical, it would be almost impossible to write plainly when desirous to do so. Turning to Eph. ii. 2, we find the words "Wherein (in sins) in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the

prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Here, if "prince" implies a personage (and if not what does it imply?) he is very clearly called a spirit, and the author of wickedness in others. The persons addressed were sinful as the world was sinful, and they were led to this condition by something that operated within them. If this working was simply that of their own evil tendencies, it is very strange phraseology to describe these tendencies as "the prince of the power of the air." How those who profess Christianity could, after a thoughtful study of the forecited passages, deny that a belief in an evil power is a necessary article of their faith, seems inexplicable to me. Nor am I disposed to say there are no sceptics who, if they attentively examined the subject, might be led to reconsider the arguments which have influenced them to reject revelation on the ground of its inconsistency in preaching truth, together with the existence of a personality of evil.

There is one mode of viewing scriptural narratives, which many who believe themselves to be believers adopt, but which has a tendency to lead to a lax adherence to doctrine and duty, or to swamp the duty in a

denial of the doctrine. I allude to the quasi-allegorical interpretations of scenes and events met with in the Bible. As an especial instance, I take the temptation as recorded by St. Luke, chap. iv. 2, &c. The whole passage is often described as symbolical in its meaning, or as a vision, or a dream. It is a long dream or vision that lasts forty days; but, waiving this, what is there to warrant the idea that it was a vision, or anything of the sort, except the judgment of the reader who, finding himself in a difficulty, wished to escape from it by giving a colouring of unreality to the entire account? The difficulty is that, believing in the truth of Revelation, he finds himself invited to include therein the existence of a Being who, knowing thoroughly who Christ was, had yet sufficient confidence in his own power to assail Him with temptation, and to promise Him rewards for yielding. Again, I would demand what good, except that of getting rid of the devil as an existing personage, is gained by making Christ fancy He was tempted, or the Evangelist narrate that He was tempted when in fact He was not? Was it for His own instruction that Christ had this dream, or for that of others? Surely not the former; and if the latter, there is

not given any interpretation of the doctrine involved in this parable, as is usually given in the case of others. In the 13th verse it is written that the devil departed from Him for a season. Did Christ merely dream that the devil departed from Him, and for a season only? Was the devil to come again, or was Christ to dream again that he would come? In this extraordinary vision, if it be one, the devil must, at least, have appeared as a real personage; and this being so, it strengthens the theory that the word "devil" applies to a person also when met with in other passages of Scripture. In conclusion, do those who support the allegorical interpretation of St. Luke's story deny the existence of the evil one? If their denial be in accordance with fact, then Christ dreamed of something that acted and spake, and yet was in fact, nothing. If they believe in the devil's existence they may as well credit the account too, given as it is in plain non-symbolical language. Rejecting this belief, it is difficult to say what they gain. Their loss is clear in so far as they spoil the sublimity of a picture, and attenuate the fulness of a doctrine.



CHAPTER II.



SHALL have occasion to recur to the subject treated of at the end of the preceding chapter. At present I wish to make a few remarks on the nature of sacrifice as bearing on the matter under investigation. The leading idea of sacrifice is that of the acknowledgment of subjection. Whether the offering be made to deprecate the wrath of a deity, or to propitiate him when a favour is asked, or simply in his honour, the underlying notion is that of inferiority, which has recourse to the Superior Being whose headship it confesses by the very act. The sacrifice to an idol instead of to God might have been, as was the idol itself, nothing ; but it was still an acknowledgment that there was a power other than God to whom the offerer bowed down, however ignor-

antly. The Jewish sacrifices were often for offences done in ignorance, showing the importance of the sin notwithstanding the unavoidable liability to it. How was such a sin a sin at all, except as ranging the sinner under the banner of some spiritual influence in "high places?" If the offence must come from the very nature fashioned by God, how was it an offence to Him otherwise than as being an involuntary homage to the great adversary who is ever on the watch to gain subjects for his kingdom? If it be true that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light—that is, that he allures to evil by the inducement of seeming good—it may be said that obedience rendered to him in such a false character is, in reality, rendered to God. But even supposing that this were true, there would still remain the danger lest the unrecognized offence might sow the seed of future alienation from the all-good Being. There may be an act which is not exactly sinful, because not done against the conscience, but which may prepare the way for the commission of that which is.

A human law-giver apportions punishment for crimes which are recognized as such by the conscience of the offender as well as by

the judgment of his fellow men. "Take the life of man, and thine shall be taken." "Steal thy neighbour's property, and thou shalt suffer accordingly." Such laws are for the security of the commonwealth. If others are enacted, such as tribute and custom, this is done for the exigences of the state. Offences against the supreme magistrate would be of the same degree as those against an ordinary individual, but if they were visited by higher retribution, it would merely be because the ruler in his single person represented the aggregate community. Still, there would be no punishment for an offence not named and described. But the Jewish sacrificial atonement for unpremeditated sin had to do with transgressions for which there existed no provision except in their remedy, against which there was no specific warning, and of which there was given no description anterior or posterior to the commission of them. These sacrifices (described by St. Paul as weak and beggarly elements) could not impart holiness, or be accepted as expiatory. They were useless if not offered with contrition of heart, and this contrition (of which the offering was necessary as an external confession) was an acknowledg-

ment that an offence had been committed (even if done unwittingly) against a sovereignty which was far exalted above those of earth. The Christian sacramental rite is suggestive of the same ideas. The word "sacrament," in Latin, denotes the oath taken by a soldier to be true to his duty and his general. So, with Christians, it designates a vow of allegiance, not so much to fight as to suffer. It involves, 1st, An acknowledgment of a supreme head and leader; and 2nd, An obligation to keep his commandments.

In the foregoing we have an implied reference to evil, mysterious and undefined. In a well-known Christian writer (John Newton, Omicron) we find the evil, or rather its effects, forcibly noticed. He says, "It would be injurious to the honour of God to suppose that things were at first created in the state they are now in, or that they will always continue so." This sentence sounds like allowing that God did not take measures for keeping the world as good as He made it. As He could not be compelled to allow its corruption, did He permit it for wise reasons which our knowledge is unable to grasp? Any view of the question is full of difficulty; but though the

passage in Rom. viii. 19. is, doubtless, of disputed interpretation, one thing in it is clear viz., that the "world" is subject to a constrained imperfection—that there is "something" which prevents it from being what its maker designed it to be. It was unwillingly made subject to "vanity;" that is, without any specified fault of its own, it was exposed to a process of deterioration through him who so subjected it. Can "him" possibly mean the God who made His work with the intention of hereafter making it worse? God moreover, be it remembered, is not a man, to modify what He produces on the occurrence of circumstances which He does not foresee. The reference, then, must be to a being evil, not good, in his action, at the same time that hope is left—hope for a better state of things when the curse under which Creation groaneth shall be removed. The New Testament is, as we have seen, pregnant with unmistakable allusions to the interference of an evil personality, possessed of the will and the power to impede and corrupt. Christ, too, in His last hours alludes to the same influence as prevailing even over Him. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." (Luke xxii. 53.) It

was the subjection, for a time, of the principle of light to an opposite element.

In the rite of sacrifice may, no doubt, be adumbrated the one great sacrifice—that of Christ. Whether we consider that event predetermined, and people's minds familiarized with the idea by the ordination of sacrificial rites, or that, the practice existing, the new revelation was accommodated to the notions of mankind by adopting the previously existing custom, does not seem to make much difference to our present inquiry. It may be asked of those who uphold the latter proposition, how those notions which originated the practice could have existed unless implanted in men by some power out of themselves. The prevalence of sacrifice is a fact. It is true it may be viewed as the inspiration of a good being : it is also true that it has been adopted by many nations who have turned it to a bad account. Shall we say that the idea sprang up among them independently, or was it the corruption of that which was excellent in itself? At all events the offering, whether made to a true God or a false one, was an act of homage rendered in expectation of a favour either present or to come.

In John xvi. 8, 9, Christ is represented as saying that the Holy Ghost shall come to convince the world of sin in not believing on Him. Now the "world" may not mean every human being, but it must include the majority. Here then we have the fact of this large number not believing on Him who was sent expressly by the Father that mankind might believe on Him. Means are adopted for remedying this unfaith. Difficulties are acknowledged to exist; endeavours are made to overcome them; and failures occur. Remedies—difficulties—failures—are these not clearly spoken of in Scripture? And if so, what account can be given of their origin? Though good shall eventually triumph over evil, there is an intermediate *struggle* for superiority.

As an instance of the effort for the suppression of evil I may venture to say that principles of action are laid down by Christ, principles, so good in themselves that they could not be carried out in the present state of the world. Take the Sermon on the Mount. If its doctrines were fully and literally adopted, society would be disorganized, and nations overthrown, when resistance to evil was not attempted, and violence and wrong so far

encouraged. But why is this? Simply because the doctrines would not be embraced by the great majority, owing to the prevailing power of evil. These teachings are in their *unlimited* extent adapted to a world where evil has scarcely entered, or whence it can be easily expelled. The modified adoption of them would tend to make such a world possible, and there is no doubt that the present one would be still worse than it is if the maxims had never been enunciated. It is obvious, moreover, that when a standard of right is recommended it should be higher than we can attain to, in order that we may not be satisfied with a degree of excellence that requires no exertion to reach. But what I am at present chiefly concerned with is this. Are not the principles above mentioned laid down by a teacher of supreme authority and absolute wisdom? Are they ever—or can they possibly be put in practice? What is the power that interferes with such a most desirable result?

Consider, again, as bearing on the subject into which we are now inquiring, the strange mixture of good and evil in the character of the saints of the Old Testament, or rather let us select a comprehensive example, and con-

fine our notice to the man after God's own heart. "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." So it is recorded in Acts xiii. 22. But how did he fulfil God's will? Certainly not in his own personal character, and yet the eyes of God cannot behold iniquity. He did God's will in executing judgment upon his enemies; in ever acknowledging and openly proclaiming Him, in sorrow and in shame, as the Lord of his allegiance, the temple of his worship, although he often in his conduct forsook the allegiance, and defiled the purity of the altar. Still no relapse into sin ever made him despair of pardon; amid the indulgence of passion, and the relinquishment of principle, he clung earnestly in profession at least to the service of the one Being whom he ever acknowledged to be his God and his Lord. "Against thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." The offence committed against the majesty of his heavenly King outweighed the wrong done to his fellow-creatures. It is useless to exclaim, "But what merits David had!" Humanly speaking he was in many points utterly bad. In a theological sense he possessed the saving

merits of repentance and faith. He seemed to hate himself as a rebel against the sovereignty of good. He might have cried, "It is not I, that have done it. I am thy subject—not I, but the corruption that dwelleth in me." With his mind he served the law of God, but with his flesh the law of sin.

The details of crimes and indecencies met with in the Bible have been not unreasonably objected to—not unreasonably as necessitating reflection and attempts at explanation; unreasonably as casting doubts on the truth of the Sacred Volume. It is obvious to remark that the Book is historically true, and that in consequence thereof the insertion of these same details becomes necessary. The men were guilty, and their guilt is chronicled accordingly. Evidently the offenders were not made perfect, though several of them were expositors of God's righteousness. Could not He have created His ministers perfect? That He did not is clear from the fact that they succumbed to temptation—miserably so in some instances. The subject is involved in difficulty, though the difficulty is not got rid of by denying Christianity. But when mention is made in the Scriptures of the *law* of

sin, as contrasted with the law of God, no distinction is drawn between the two with reference to the power to enforce obedience, but simply as to the results of that obedience on the one hand or on the other. Now a law, if not imperative, is at least authoritative, and requires a lawgiver. God is the lawgiver in the one case—who in the other? Considering then how far the forecited men obeyed the law of sin, and how universal mankind have partially, at least, yielded to it, we should not greatly err in maintaining an almost compulsory liability to go wrong. We are therefore told that none can be saved by his own merits, which evidently follows from the impossibility of any human being fulfilling the law of righteousness; so the most constant offender and the part-sinner part-saint agree in this, that either alike must cry out, "I have served Baal by my actions, but I renounce him as my ruler and my guide, and acknowledge myself the servant of Him whom I have not served." This account is strictly based upon the teaching of Revelation, directly as to the greater portion, inferentially as to the remainder.

In so far as the grossest sinners sincerely

sorrowed for and confessed their guilt, they took, like David, the side of the better power. The chances were that after the sin, the sorrow would not follow. But whenever it did, in feeling it, they gave in their allegiance to the great Creator, and thus far forth partook largely of the nature of Christ, though in small degree only of his character, the latter being the practical exposition of the former.

As David possessed, so to speak, two sides to his life, the one the too frequent practice of evil, the other the never-failing confession of good ; so, as it appears to me, the old Jews in general had what may be termed a double existence ; the one real, the other allegorical. What I mean is that a great portion of their history, whether that of an incorporated society or relating to individuals, seems intended to shadow forth some divine principle or precept, which bears upon the upholding of the one rightful lord. Writers, in fact, tell us much the same thing when they urge that the Hebrew ecclesiastical polity was constructed to keep alive, amid a heathen world, the light and knowledge of the true religion ; and how can we possibly suppose that all the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation ; the cere-

monial observances of the Levitical law, &c., were necessary, in all their extension and duration, for such a purpose, unless there were great obstacles to its fulfilment to be overcome? These obstacles, it will be said, were found in the utterly godless condition of the surrounding Gentile peoples. But how was it that they had lapsed into this condition? It must have required a power to lead *them* astray from the truth, as much as it did a peculiar power to keep the Jewish nation (and with what difficulty were they kept!) in the right path.

Without supposing, as I have suggested, that the Hebrews lived in part an allegorical life, it would be almost impossible to understand the scriptural account of this remarkable race. They were selected by God from among the nations of the earth, though ranging among the very lowest on the scale of personal merit; in their wars they were altogether helpless except when palpably assisted by Heaven; we see them fly from a few opponents, and give way to fear and utter hopelessness, shortly after the walls of a town had been miraculously cast down before their eyes, that they might enter over them; they are scorched with

celestial fire for their discontented murmurings, and incontinently proceed to reiterate the offence ; they die and are revived ; fall and are restored, and are still in numerous being after having undergone each species of persecution, and exhibited every phase of degradation. The theory I have merely hinted at, as not being, perhaps, strictly connected with my immediate purpose, seems to me a very important one, and which might, if thoughtfully carried out, help to vindicate the ways of Heaven with the people of Israel and its great men—men who so often

“ Left the highway of God’s love to turn
Into the bye-path of some filthy sin.”

As not unconnected with our present subject, we may take the character of a man of, in one sense, unmixed evil. It is even written of him in Matt. xxvi. 24, “ It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” He may have had some estimable qualities ; have been less a general offender against morality than was David ; his crime may be said to have conduced to the eternal good of mankind : but all would count as nothing against the sin of having betrayed Christ to his great adversary. If the above quoted sentence be not,

as has been said, a mere proverbial expression for great misery, we have the assertion of Him to whom God entrusted the work of creation, that it would have been better for a certain human being not to have been born, the birth of human beings following, be it remembered from the mode of their creation, and fulfilling one of its purposes. If we substitute for the original words what seems a fair equivalent for them, and imagine Christ as saying, "It had been good for that man if I had not created him," what inferences can we draw from the statement? Non-existence would have been better for the man himself, not better of course for Christ, not better certainly for the human race in general. It was necessary that Christ should be betrayed in order to ensure the greatest good of mankind. Yet it was bad for the betrayer, and so an evil instrument became the author of incalculable good. Does it not clearly follow that Judas was inspired by an evil power for his own purposes, although those purposes were defeated? How they were defeated, or even what they were, we need not stop to inquire, supposing that any inquiry could be, which is very doubtful, conducted successfully.

We do not gain much light from commentators on the above important passage. They, in general, rather paraphrase the difficulty than attempt to explain it. On any interpretation we must grant the presence of a necessary evil, if not of an evil power, making the existence of a human creature a curse to him—a curse without any equivalent blessing—a curse which it would have been good for him to have escaped, by not having been born into the world at all. As in the case of a world made subject to vanity, this wretched man from a child knowing neither good nor evil, grew up into a great wickedness, entitling him to be called the very son of perdition.

The Scriptures, we are told, were written for our learning, but surely for a much larger learning than can be gotten from their historical facts viewed as mere moral examples. What special knowledge can we gain from their perusal—a perusal reverent and unprejudiced? One thing is plain from them: that disobedience to a command of God is virtual obedience to God's enemy; an act clearly ordered by Him must be performed, whatever its nature may appear to be in the judgment of him who receives the order. Thus, for in-

stance, in the case of Saul and the Amalekites, Samuel hews Agag in pieces, apparently to enforce this principle, and instruct the too lenient king, by an act which might otherwise be termed unnecessary and barbarous. An analogous remark is applicable to the history of the old prophet who was slain by a lion, for what was in itself seemingly no sufficient offence. What interpretation, moreover, can we put upon the passage Mark vi. 5, where it is written that Christ *could* do—*οὐκ ἠδύνατο*—no mighty works because of the people's unbelief. Matthew Henry remarks upon this, "It is a strange expression, as if unbelief tied the hands of Omnipotence itself." In a sense they were tied, in so far as God can do nothing derogatory to His own nature and dignity. May we not conclude that unfaith in God or Christ was faith in him whose works the latter was incarnate to destroy, and that He was *prevented* by the very reason of His incarnation from doing good to the children of evil? As long as they were not drawn unto Him by the Father, benefiting them was like acknowledging Him whose servants they were.



CHAPTER III.



THE whole question of the existence of an evil power has been disposed of in a very hasty manner by saying that the "devil" means the bad passions of our nature, and nothing else. I have before touched on this subject, and I would now ask, are these passions themselves causeless? Are they not rather the impulses of a sentient and intellectual being? The impulse must, in each case, come from without, either directly or indirectly, as the effect of some antecedent cause. Call it the result of organization; but whence the organization? As none "can keep alive his own soul," so none can "make his own soul, or its dwelling-place, or its affections." Preluding that I do not here limit the word "soul" to mean the vital principle merely,

I assert that the supposed organization cannot well be an accidental concourse of atoms that produces an effect not inherent in the atoms themselves, which must require an Intelligence to arrange, and afterwards to superintend the working of the arrangement. The conclusion resembles that drawn by St. Paul, that man is influenced to good or evil by forces beyond his own will or wish.

St. Peter moreover states (Acts x. 38) that Christ went about healing all that were oppressed of the devil. According to the fore-cited solution of the question, could we here make a verbal substitution, and read "Healing all that were oppressed of their evil passions?"—those passions, that is to say, which, as the deputed Creator of mankind, He must have Himself permitted to exist or to be developed. By this view Christ is evidently represented as remedying His own imperfect work. Of course there is a difficulty in the matter as to the creation of beings who are universally and irresistibly liable to err; but much the same difficulty is encountered whether or not we believe in the truth of revelation.

What man who looks into himself but

reflects on the thoughts that occasionally *force* themselves upon him, which he shudders at entertaining, and instantly strives to expel? I do not allude to evil imaginations which, though wrong may be pleasant, or to any suggestion of mere criminal action; but to such as start up suddenly, like spectres, unbidden, and unwelcome, and which are utterly unconnected with anything previously done or contemplated by the person whom they visit. There seems a sort of fascination in the matter—a fascination as external in its origin as that exercised by one animal on another. These thoughts come suddenly upon us with a tyrannical power. Those which are suggestive of good are gentle and persuasive, and have, besides, an object in view. The former class have no object, except, it may be, to frighten by the hideousness of their imputation on the nature and dealings of God. Men sometimes feel a strange craving to jump over a precipice—fail to extinguish the longing and the result is death.

The thoughts above referred to are but exaggerations of many others only less monstrously evil, and having something definite in view. Now, whence do they come? Who

would reply, "From God"? Is it conceivable that He could inspire ideas blasphemously insulting to Himself, and subversive of all the principles on which a trust in Him is founded? But some may say, as before, "They come from our bad hearts, our own evil natures." Our bad hearts! Can this be considered a satisfactory explanation? Did we make our hearts or instil their affections? Our evil nature! What is nature? Is it a god or goddess in itself? Be it so; then it is only another name for an evil power, if it be superior to ourselves and use its influence for ill. In all the discussion of those who reject such a power, there appears a certain shallowness of argument, or rather a stopping short of argument altogether; a resting on simple assertion; an exclamation of "Of course we are all bad. No man is perfect. Our own passions, appetites, &c., are sufficient to account for the phenomenon." This is more a reiteration of words than an analysis of facts. If they who utter them believe in a Creator, do they suppose that He made man half good and half evil, or that He made him originally perfect and then corrupted him Himself? For the sake of argument, suppose that man was

made perfect, but liable to fall by temptation. But here is a contradiction. If he was perfect, whence could come the first lapse into evil? If the motives that led to it originated in himself, most certainly he was not perfect. If they sprang from a source external to himself, it only shows that the designs of his Creator were, for a time, interfered with by a power who was—

“All—but less than He
Whom thunder had made greater.”

To pursue the subject last started, I ask, what is nature? In the eyes of many it seems a mere sequence of phenomena or events. We view a succession of changes in the heavens or on the earth, or a diversity of action in men arising from difference of character or influential circumstances; and in viewing these phenomena, we merely observe that it is the nature of material bodies to act in obedience to such a law, or that a reasoning creature behaves in conformity with his “nature.” The words “act” and “law” are liable to different interpretations. The material body, in a sense, obeys a law, but it is only an unintelligent compliance, though the law itself must be framed by intelligence. A match will burn if

fire be applied to it ; the man is not such a passive instrument, for he knows what he is doing. Still, his action is in a great measure decided by circumstances not of his own choosing, but which suggest, if not dictate, his choice ; by, in fact, the "law in his members," and which law (or impression) is made by an intelligence, good or evil. He must submit to one or the other. He cannot halt between two courses. How does this affect the question of responsibility? The word need not be used, for whichever side the man takes, he accepts thereby the advantages or disadvantages (each side offers both) attaching to his adherence. I imagine that the advantages will be far greater on the one part than on the other, although many, judging by their actions, seem to think it a mere matter of opinion or of chance.

Such things, from their universality, are not sufficiently thought out. If we saw a heavy body rolling over a plane, should we be contented with saying that we beheld a solid ball in motion, without casting a thought on the impulse which caused it to move? So with the movements of the heart, there must be an impulse that leads to the effect observed ; and

the question is, what is that impulse? Is the "nature" in the man something born with him or contracted by example? In the latter case, if allowed, it is simply the bad nature that induces him to follow the example; and so we gain no step in the inquiry. Again, whence the sin? If a man offends involuntarily—that is, if, "when he would do good, evil is continually present with him," and if he experiences this by reason of a degenerate nature which he has acquired from the original corruption in Paradise, or in any other way inherited or received, such offence is no sin in any human sense. We might as well bring a charge of forgery against a person whose hand was forcibly held and guided for him to sign the inculcating document.

Now, if there be by necessity a great evil power, man may "sin" by committing an act which is one of fealty to that power; but God is justified. And if the greatest sinner be redeemed in the course of eternity, the redemption is less a satisfaction of God's offended justice than an overcoming the evil being by gaining over one of his followers. With regard to the question of God's justice being offended, I may remark that, if He has created

man, and perceives what is in his heart, and has perfect foreknowledge of all things that will happen, He cannot be offended as a man would be by the wrongdoings of a person from whom he had hoped for better things. The fact may rather be that the anger of God is against the sinner as having insulted His dignity, and offered despite to His supremacy. And though He perfectly knew that the offender would so act, still it might be necessary, even for Him, to visit with displeasure whatever is a practical contradiction of His authority ; not viewing the offence so much as a moral crime as a subjection to one of the multitudinous expressions of evil. The passages of the Bible which represent the wrath of God as excited against a sinner are too numerous for quotation, but the offence which roused the anger seems, almost invariably, connected with a falling-off from the homage due exclusively to Him. Thus in Deut. xxix. 28, we read that the Lord rooted the Israelites out of the land in anger, the reason of which is noted in verse 26 : " For they went and served other gods," &c. According to Jeremiah xlv. 8, they provoked God to wrath, " burning incense to other gods." In 1 Thess.

i. 10 the Apostle describes his converts as delivered from the wrath to come, and in the preceding verse he represents them as having turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. In Romans i. it is written, that the wrath of God was revealed against all those who had changed His image into one made like unto corruptible man. In Eph. v. 6 and Col. iii. 6, "covetousness," or as it may be translated, "sensuality," is stigmatized as idolatry, as being, in fact, the worship as God of that which was not *the* God. Such instances might be multiplied abundantly. The sacred history, in short, very generally, and by implication if not directly, reprobates crime as a slighting of the Divinity who would have all men saved from their sins and made one with Him.

"It is no longer I, but sin, that dwelleth in me" (Rom. viii. 17). So writes St. Paul. According to what has been before said, how idle it seems, to be content with affirming that when the Apostle enlarges on his double nature—the desire to do well, and the power within that compels to ill—he alludes merely to his own depraved heart! To repeat myself, I ask, did God implant the good wish, and, to

counteract it, inspire the evil heart? or did He give the evil heart that the man, by resisting its suggestions, might be thereby strengthened for good? According to the latter view, God is the author of evil in order that good may arise. A person may solve the difficulty by saying, "I reject the writings altogether which contain such things." But in getting rid of the Scriptures he does not get rid of evil, and of the good that mingles with, and, as it were, fights against it. He does not get rid of conscience and its voice, often perplexing, occasionally misleading. It is, I think, less difficult to account for these and similar facts, if we call in the aid of revelation, rightly interpreted, to explain them.

In whatever light we view these important matters of discussion, it is quite evident that they involve a certain conflict of principles, an opposition of interests. The origin of sin is attributed to the law (Rom. vii.) Therefore sin consists less in yielding to a natural instinct than in disobeying a law which forbids its indulgence. Here clearly seems an attempt to enlist the inquirer into these things on one side of the contending principles—the side of the lawgiver. The indwelling of evil

being made conscious by the revelation of a law, if a man heartily renounces the power which prompts to ill, but which in a measure he unwillingly serves, he may still be inscribed as an adherent of the better cause.

All the gifts of God are good—that is, in as far as they come unmixed from Him. Among these gifts the conscience may be considered an important one. But, however originating, it is only in a general sense a guide to good ; for it occasionally leads to bad, even in the most moral and enlightened men. Did God implant this monitor in man as it exists ? Did He give it to counteract the evil disposition of which He was the author ?—poison the soul and then exhibit the remedy ? We cannot allow this. A man believes, say, that he is doing good when he is doing evil, or otherwise he acts in opposition to his conscience. Answer that his conscience is weak or unenlightened, and you make out that God gave him either an imperfect or a misleading gift. Or, reply that it is corrupted by his interests or passions, and you grant that these passions or interests are able to defeat, in part, God's instinct. Say that man's nature is desperately wicked, and that God implants in

him this instinct to prevent its becoming *irreclaimably* so ; here then is a conflict between two powers—nature and God. Man did not make that nature, and if God made it as it is, He is but fighting against Himself.

With reference to the personality of wickedness, it has been argued that as God is all-powerful, the existence of evil (without granting an evil power) proves that it might have been necessary even for Him to allow it, in order to produce the greatest good possible. I may remark, *en passant*, that to talk of anything being *necessary* to God is, in fact, to admit much of the matter in dispute ; for he who grants such a statement may go on to ask whether, if God be not constrained by any opposing principle, it can be consistent with His attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness to sanction that which is in opposition to His own character. However, to suppose that to cause the greatest good without admitting evil may involve a contradiction of terms, is postulating a great deal. Such might have been the fact, but the fact might have been otherwise with greater show of probability, and in stricter consonance with the perfect righteousness of the Deity.

To take a case where good comes out of ill—let us suppose that fever, or other disease, exists in a town. This, in itself an evil, gives opportunity for the display of courage, charity, and other virtues, amid the rich and healthy classes of the residents, which virtues would not have been elicited without the existence of the evil. But then, what bad qualities likewise may it not develop in those who withhold their aid—the heartless, the miserly, the timid? Both the good and evil natures existed in these people prior to their development, but the development not only brought their existence to light, but established and strengthened them. In such arguments disputants too often confine their view to the points of a statement which support their conclusions, and overlook those which tell against them. Again, with reference to the same subject, I ask, What is our idea of heaven? As the seat of perfect excellence and happiness, or as one where evil must enter to produce a greater degree of its opposite? The more natural view of the whole question is that, evil existing, however originated, God brings the greatest possible good out of it, not that He is compelled, so to speak, to make

use of its instrumentality in order to produce results in most accordance with His will.

The personality of evil may be quite consistent with the passages in the Old and New Testament, where God is described as the "one God"—that there is none beside Him, &c. Of course, these expressions are true in the sense intended, viz., that there is but one true God who is worthy of worship ; but one infinitely good Being, as the word signifies. This conjecture seems confirmed by what we read in 2 Cor. iv. 4, of the " God of this world," that is to say, of another ruler, or power, who is *not* good, and whom worldly men in practice worship. The interpretation of the word "God," and of the actions ascribed to Him, must be limited by the circumstances of the case, and by the notions which we are led to form of Him from other sources. Thus, for instance, in Isaiah xlv. 7, God is represented as creating evil, which He could not possibly do in the sense of originating sin. It may mean that He creates the seeming evil of suffering, or such like ; or that He does not always interfere to prevent evil, as when it is said that He left Hezekiah to follow his own devices. In regard to this last passage it

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might be asked, on the supposition that these devices were evil, and that Hezekiah was, on the whole, a good man, whether he was left to fall in order that he might arise more upright, or whether he was rescued by the author of his salvation from a temporary desertion to the side opposed to his Saviour. The two suppositions are distinct from each other, and very different in their consequences, and there is no slight warrant for the correctness of the latter.





CHAPTER IV.



WITH reference to the existence of a great evil being, it does not seem to reflect upon the omnipotence of God that he *is* suffered to exist instead of being at once destroyed, or at least deprived of all power to hurt. "At once" is a human phrase, and has no relation to Him who, being eternal, can have no more mental than physical connection with time. He must act *in* time no less than in space, but whether that time be a second or a century, it bears the same proportion, or rather the same absence of proportion, to His own endless life. If God can *certainly* do a thing a thousand years hence, He is as omnipotent as if He could do it quicker than thought could imagine it done. Would it be a valid argument against the power of the Deity to assert

that some necessary thing was rightly done by Him, but that He took time to do it? A second may be subdivided infinitely; in what infinitesimal portion of time must omnipotence act to prove itself entitled to the appellation? Is it, moreover, irreverent to suppose that God could do something well, but better or best in a course of years, this something being what no other power could ever effect? Omnipotence may consist not merely in being able to do all things, for perhaps if they are, in such a case, not done *best* they are not done well.

“ But what if power supreme can find no way
But time eternal for its full display,
Though man may haste to act in sight of death,
And be discreet, or wicked, in a breath?”

Sentient creatures often require a period to reach maturity which is longer in proportion to their ultimate excellence. An animal of the lowest organic and intellectual type may be fully developed before man, born into life at the same instant, has passed beyond the most elementary stage. God Himself is perfect, and at no moment was otherwise; but then He is eternal, which abrogates all relations of time, and consequently of progress.

This condition, however, need not apply to His designs, which, if we can trust sacred history, are gradually unfolded into completeness; and, according to what is stated above, there seems a connection between what is gradual and what is good.

God in nature clearly works by means. These require time, or they cease to be means in any human sense. These means cause evil as well as good—in fact, the delay imposed by time on the realization of a good object is itself an evil. Take, for instance, the fall of heavy and continuous rain. This both originates disease and prevents it. It fills springs, it scours drains, and produces sickness in its ultimate effects. God could have prevented the necessity of rain altogether; but when means are used, all that can fairly be expected from them is that they should produce more good than evil. And so in the moral world—because the establishment of Christianity was prepared for through many centuries, do we on that account dispute the power of the Creator? There was doubtless great delay—as men count delay—in the accomplishment of His designs; in fact, they are not yet fulfilled. In the earliest ages there were hints of

the coming Messiah. Types prefigured Him ; prophets predicted Him ; He was foreshadowed by ceremonies ; even heathen nations expected the advent of some "great one" ; and when He had appeared, only the beginning of the end was consummated ; nor even now, more than eighteen centuries after the death of Christ, can we, on Scriptural authority, declare that God is "all in all."

Nor, moreover, are the means adopted by Providence always immediately successful. In Mark v. the kingdom of heaven is likened in its progress to seed sown. First appeareth the blade, after that the ear, then the full corn in the ear ; but in many cases the corn appears never to arrive at maturity. In like manner the sacred writ represents God as stretching out His hands all day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people. All Scripture was written for our learning, and what can we learn from such a passage unless we accept what it plainly indicates ? Give a poetical version of the statement, and where are we to stop, and where is faith to rest ? It represents a long-continued effort of Deity that was not immediately successful. Nor would the difficulty be lessened if Deism were

true, unless we suppose the Creator to be indifferent to the vice and misery of His creatures. According to Luke xiii. 16 (before referred to), a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound during eighteen years, was freed from the curse by Christ. Why not freed at the time of first possession? Answer that it might have been more for the glory of God, or the good of the sufferer, to happen later; and the same answer will apply to the toleration of the existence or the power of the devil. It is important to repeat that God works by means, and these necessitate delay. For instance, Micah predicts that Christ should be born in Bethlehem. His parents lived at Nazareth; and the "taxing," or rather census, was the indirect means of their going to Bethlehem. Do we call this a devious way for the Divine Ruler to effect His purpose? Do we arraign His omnipotence in consequence? In such matters, and in the long-dated preparations for introducing Christianity, could God have acted otherwise consistently with His attributes? Were means and times necessary even for Him? If not necessary, why did He act as if they were? If they were the best way of accomplishing His

ends, He is bound by His attributes to do whatever is best. This sounds like a truism, but I wish to impress on my reader (if I have one), that the use of methods involving delay is far from implying weakness. But, perhaps, it might be even better to detract from the power of God than from His goodness ; the latter quality exists ever unmodified ; the former may be subject to time and fitness—a subjection entailed on it by the very goodness itself.

It might serve to give fixity to our speculations if we could gain some insight into the nature of the evil power. In the parable, Luke viii. 4, Christ states that the seed sown is the word of God, and that in one instance the devil cometh, and taketh the seed, or word, out of the man's heart, and so renders it unfruitful. There are two points to be noticed here, firstly, the wisdom which could discover what was in the human heart with a view to removing it ; and, secondly, the ability to defeat, by removing it, what was at least sanctioned by God. In John xiii. 2 and 27, Satan puts a notion into the heart of Judas, and finally "enters" into him, which can only mean that he inspired him as a spirit might,

thereby exercising a power analogous to that which we attribute to God.

In Heb. ii. 14, the devil is said to have the power of death, which, however interpreted, must signify the possession of vast authority, so great, in fact, that Christ was incarnated to destroy it. In Acts v. 3, Satan incites Ananias to lie. He is constantly represented as the tempter to evil. Since we cannot suppose that he appears to the eye, and speaks with the voice, in what way does he deceive mankind?—and if he is, as pictured in Scripture, continually influencing all people everywhere, omnipresence must be one of his attributes.

Shall we say that God merely permits this action on the part of the evil one? Then He, the all-good, makes use of an evil instrument to imperil the success of His own designs—I say imperil, for those designs are sometimes, as far as we can judge, exposed to temporary defeat. He desireth not the death of a sinner, and can there be any doubt that many die in their sins? It evidently follows that something happens which He does not desire. Does any philosopher assert that the permission of an almighty Being is equivalent to causation? Then let him apply his doc-

trine to the case now before us, and he makes that Being the author of a result which contradicts His own attributes. And, moreover, if greater good comes out of evil than would have ensued without it, then evil becomes the origin of good ; yet man, at least, must not do wrong, in order that right may ensue. Should a disputant boldly affirm that in the action of the Supreme Ruler evil is good if He so wills it, I can only reply that such a theory lands us in a chaos, which no moral nor intellectual light can penetrate ; where we should grope guideless for the present, and hopeless for the future. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?

Religious belief sometimes extends itself into religious prejudice ; and writers will not always grant the consequences which their words involve. Thus in some remarks on the Mānichæan heresy we read, "The notion of a good and an evil principle warring against each other, and opposed as light and darkness, seems closely related to the revealed truth that our world is the theatre of an awful conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman—the Destroyer and the Redeemer of our race" (Conder's "View of all

Religions," p. 617). " Seems closely related"—the relation is very intimate indeed, for it is the truth itself, not perhaps Scripturally expressed ; although, of course, it may be unwarrantably extended, or exaggerated into superstition. When the author writes of an "awful conflict," he merely repeats what divines have insisted upon, and preachers innumerable have preached upon, respecting the contest above described. Poets catch up the strain, and make Lucifer exclaim,

" I battle it against him, as I battled
In highest heaven—
All, all will I dispute ! And world by world,
And star by star, and universe by universe,
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,
Which it ne'er shall till he or I be quenched."

Sir Isaac Newton said that "Paradise Lost" proved nothing ; but it does, at least, prove that a Christian poet, as well as an unbelieving one, drew from the Bible his picture of the mightiest and most mysterious of all contests ; and can there possibly be such a conflict as represented without some approach to equality in the persons waging it ? If a king with twenty thousand men goes forth to meet one who comes against him with ten thousand, he

is evidently the stronger of the two ; but by the very act of preparing for the battle, he confesses that there is an adversary to be overcome, and that the victory cannot be won without effort. May not a reflecting man esteem it a glorious privilege to contend on the better side ?

I renew my protest against the theory that we cannot argue on these matters, since we know not the connection of events referred to the innumerable varieties of their occurrence in all times and in all places ; and that a knowledge thereof would modify our opinions, or even reverse them. But no such knowledge could obliterate the distinction between good and evil, or justify the employment of the latter to produce the former. We might explain, or explain away, anything whatever by adopting such a loose argument as that we do not understand all the relations of things, and therefore cannot decide the question. What we do understand, and that from the conscience given us by God, is that no sophistry can justify wrong-doing, and still less in beings superior to man. The light we have cannot make clear many difficulties ; but if any concatenation of circumstances could con-

found the limits of right and wrong, we might as well be without any moral sense whatever. The Deity may, from seeming evil, educe good ; if it be only seeming it matters not, or He may authorize physical evil to produce results in conformity with His will, but he could not willingly permit the very least sin in order to elicit an effect however important or desirable.

There is a passage (John xix. 11) which may on a superficial glance seem to contradict the doctrine I have just ventured to lay down ; according to it, Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were given thee from above ; therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." But the power that was given to Pilate by God was that of the magistracy ; his sin consisted in a wrong use of his authority, to which he was tempted by the author of all wrong—"God tempteth no man." The word "therefore" means, that as the high priest held a still more responsible office, with reference to the present case, than did Pilate, he had yet greater sin in its maladministration. The powers that be are ordained of God, but not the sins which they commit in the performance of their duty.

The most important instance of the contention between good and evil is the temptation of Christ as recorded by St. Matthew. This will, of course, be regarded as a fable by all who reject revelation ; but even by many who accept it, the narrative is so modified as to reduce it to some sort of emblematic representation, and thereby endanger faith in the literal meaning of other portions of the sacred volume. The New Testament is full, as we have seen, of allusions to Christ's *contest* with the power of evil ; and there is so little to warrant a symbolical version thereof, that it would seem more logical in a reader to deny *in toto* the sacred character of the writings which contain such statements. The interpretation aforesaid is engendered between a wish to believe, and the startling nature of the phenomenon claiming that belief.

How does the narrative run ? St. Matthew informs us—and I write for those who have faith in St. Matthew—that Christ was tempted by the devil for forty days, this temptation apparently consisting of suggestions made to the inner man, as in other cases of the sort. Afterwards, Christ, “becoming a hungered,” was assailed visibly by Satan, and offered

great inducements to desert the cause of God. Now, if Christ did not fast as stated, but merely dreamed that He fasted, the whole account has an air of untruth. If He was not carried up in the air, but was merely shown the kingdoms of the earth in a vision ; and if He could only refuse or accept the offer in a vision likewise, how was the question of His victory over evil, or any question whatever, settled at all? What was the utility of the whole process? Was it merely a dream—a dream of forty days—to show us that we should resist temptation? If so, the strength of the lesson would be miserably enfeebled—and in dreams, moreover, we often commit actions foreign to our waking nature—and the temptation in Paradise, the appearances of angels, and all other mysterious events of the kind, must be merely visions, or allegories, or fables, and the Bible chiefly regarded as a book of apologues or representations which, however beautiful and suggestive, would have no more real *authority* than “Paradise Regained,” or the “Pilgrim’s Progress.”

It is not difficult to discern when any writing is intended to be wholly metaphorical. A narrative may state, for instance, that the

seas ran mountains high ; that a man's eyes started from his forehead, or flashed lightning, &c. ; but such expressions are only used to *illustrate* the fact of a storm, of a state of great excitement, and so on. The storm is a real occurrence ; the poetical language heightens the description, and fact is the basis of metaphor. Let it be asserted that the whole of the temptation is a parable ; then there is no other parable in the New Testament which resembles it. The parables there are spoken by Christ, not of Him ; and He appends the interpretation thereof when this is at all required. "The field is the world—the tares are the children of the wicked one—the enemy that sowed them is the devil, &c." These parables have little or no importance in themselves, considering by whom they were spoken. It is the application of them which enforces what they represent ; and if the temptation be a parable, it differs greatly from others of its kind both in form and in utility. It would be an exaggerated method of enforcing a simple moral lesson, which might be better taught in a way that could not be misunderstood.

But if the story of the temptation be read

as it is written, it exhibits the tempter as more than a mere created spirit ; for he would not have made such a stupendously daring attempt, unless he had some faith in his chance of success ; nor would he have offered to bestow the gifts he did, unless he believed in his power to confer them. He must have known that He whom he besieged with his proposals could see through an untruth, and so defeat such an attempt in its first stage. If the tempter, furthermore, was not a self-existent spirit, Christ, as the deputed of God, must have created him, directly or indirectly, in order that he might *tempt* Himself when He had taken on Him the form and nature of a son of man. If the devil was only a fallen angel, one of two things must follow :—

1. Either God made a being (knowing what that being would turn out to be) to thwart His own plans for the salvation of mankind ;
- or, 2. He allowed of or at least did not interfere with the existence of such a being, in order that He might do good by His agency.

Neither supposition seems consistent with the perfect wisdom and goodness of the Creator. And if this be the case, the conclusion follows that we are authorized on scriptural grounds

to maintain the independent existence of Satan.

Not all Christians have acknowledged the divine authority of the Book of Revelation. Among others, for instance, Luther, I believe, did not. But to those who do, I would remark that the passage xii. 7, &c., clearly seems to have no reference to the past, but to be a prediction of the future. The apocalypse is more of a prophecy than a history, but whatever be the nature of the passage quoted, it refers to the Christian Church that will be. When allusion is made to the devil or Satan who deceiveth (not "will deceive") the whole world, that allusion must relate to a time long posterior to his supposed expulsion from Heaven. This "expulsion" can have no other meaning than it bears when Christ affirmed that He saw "Satan fall from heaven," viz., from the height of his power and pride. In the two following verses, the glory of the Church is alluded to as a thing to be; and in verses 10 and 12, the devil is described as come down, knowing that he had but a short time. All this is applicable to the final consummation of all things only. So it is interpreted by Lowman and Horsley. To

suppose verses 7 to 13 to be parenthetical, and to translate ἐγένετο "had been," seems an unwarrantable liberty of interpretation. Were it correct, verse 10 would read, "now (ἄρτι) there *had been* salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God," contrary to the sense.

I can find no passage in either Testament justifying the common opinion that Satan was an angel cast down from heaven by reason of his rebellious pride. In the Epistle of Jude, allusion is made to the angels who "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." But, however this mysterious event came to pass, nothing is said to warrant the notion that the supreme evil power was one of the angelic host on that occasion. He is elsewhere described as having kept his first estate "from the beginning," and *might* (for we know nothing about the matter) have exercised his office of tempter upon celestial natures as well as on man.

A disputant might perhaps quote verse 6, 1 Tim. iii., and maintain that it runs counter to my belief, the inference from what is there written being that the devil was cast out of Heaven for his pride. But the verse simply

states that a man who is lifted up with pride falls into the condemnation of the devil—not a word about Heaven or of the devil falling therefrom ; and it would be preposterous to base such a startling theory on so slight a foundation. The devil, whether eternal or not, might be justly condemned for his pride ; but if he were originally a good angel, and dwelling in Heaven with his compeers in goodness and none other, how could he be corrupted and fall unless through the influence of some spiritual wickedness whose home Heaven was not ? and if he merely exhibited in his degraded person the ruin of an archangel, and the excess of glory obscured, how was it possible for him to acquire the power of deceiving the whole world ; and if not acquired by him, by whom was it imparted to him ?

There are detached passages of Scripture that have a bearing upon the subject under discussion. For instance, the “glorifying the Lord” is a duty often insisted on. This could be done in a peculiar sense if there were a great evil principle over whom He could be glorified ; but it is very difficult to understand how the Deity could be exalted over the insignificance of man ; and the mere expression

"O, Lord! we give Thee glory," loses much of its force unless there be at the same time a tacit reference to another being who is higher than humanity.

If we talk of a king as glorious, we mean that he has acquired distinction over, or in comparison with, others of his kind in rank and ability; not that he has put his foot on a wretched animal to crush it out of existence. Again, take the words "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (that is, the prince of this world). Now, *could* there be *any* comparison between God and a mere angel? If so, the statement would be in effect, "Greater is the Creator than he whom He created—the potter than the vessel of his hands;" a truth certainly, but one scarcely calling for publicity. The Holy Ghost, moreover, was not given until Christ was glorified (St. John vii. 39). The glorifying here probably means the consummation on the cross of His victory over Satan; and till then it was not possible to blend the divine nature with man's. Till then it was comparatively easy, as says St. Paul (2 Cor. ii. 11), for the evil power to get an advantage over him and others, for he was not ignorant of *his devices*.

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This latter expression, it may be remarked, could hardly be used of a human passion or corruption, but properly only of a personality; and to that personality not even what may be called the worship of ignorance, and of omission to do what God enjoins must be rendered; for even he who knows not his Lord's will and yet commits things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes, the punishment not being one inflicted in vengeance, but to remind him of and enforce his allegiance.





CHAPTER V.

IT may be naturally asked of me whether, entertaining as I do such a notion, *based on Scripture*, of an uncreated spiritual power of evil, I carry on the hypothesis to the extent of his eventual destruction? Such a subject presents many phases of view; but, in the first place, to believers in the inspiration of the entire Bible I would quote the following passages. In Rev. xii. 9, and xx. 2, the evil being is represented as cast out and as bound for a period. Now the power that can apportion a temporary punishment or suspension of influence to another power must be greater than the latter, and can increase its judgment indefinitely when the time suits. Also in Luke x. 18, the allusion to Satan's fall from heaven must be held to mean his descent from high

authority. In 1 John iii. 8, and Rom. vi. 20, Christ is represented as incarnate to destroy his works ; and this is practically equivalent to a destruction of himself, for if the evil one could not work his works he would cease to exist as an efficient cause. He is therefore pictured as bruised under the feet of believers, who are thereby withdrawn fully and finally from his dominion ; and what can be done for some can be done for all who are content to enrol themselves under the banner of good. Again, *vide* Heb. ii. 14, Christ came to deliver by His own death those who feared to die as being in bondage to Satan, and so far to deprive the latter of his power, his power at least over them and all who would accept the conditions offered. Finally, refer to Matt. xxv. 41. Whatever meaning be attached to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, or followers, it clearly denotes a subjection of some sort ; and a subjection, however limited in time and degree, may be made complete and final by Him who has the present power of enforcing it to any extent short of completeness. In the same chapter of Matthew, the good who are destined to the inheritance of Heaven are represented as being blessed by

God. The bad who inherit hell are cursed, not by God, but by their own acts, which signify their allegiance to God's great enemy. The fire to which the wicked were condemned was not *prepared* for them originally, but for the devil and his angels, and by their own choice they had enrolled themselves among that community.

I assume that I have clearly proved, and that on the evidence of the Scriptures themselves, the existence of an influence that interferes injuriously with human action, in accordance with what is stated in Gal. v. 17, viz., that there is a contrariety between the flesh and the spirit, so that men *cannot* do the things they would. On the same evidence, if it can be trusted, the eventual overthrow of this evil influence may be held as certain. But it will be asked, and properly, whether if this power to whom the "flesh" is subjected, have an uncreated existence, He can ever cease to be. It is impossible to *prove* any point of so mysterious a matter. In fact, any theory that could establish incontestably the extirpation of an independent evil personality, and throw a clear light on the many branches of the subject, would render useless all re-

ligious treatises hitherto written, and preclude the necessity of any new ones. Many objections will doubtless be made to the mere handling of such a subject; and I may be told that "all things will come right in the end—all difficulties will be resolved when time shall be no more, &c." The same remarks have been made with reference to the interpretation of prophecy; but such a final enlightenment will justify the ways of God, but will be of no service to the living and offending man. What is wanted is such a *present* evidence of truth as will turn the sinner from his sins in time, before he enters on the eternity where there may be no place for repentance. Before venturing to pursue such an inquiry, I would simply premise that if we could imagine that the evil being would eventually bend his pride in submission to one who is greater as well as better, he would, in that case, cease to exist—to exist as what he is. The Yezidis, or devil worshippers of Mesopotamia (who sing a chant called the Song of the Lord Jesus), believe that he will be eventually restored. They never mention Him by name, but call him reverentially the Mighty Angel. I do not, however, feel that I

have sufficient warrant for pursuing this speculation further.

The great question is—can a being existing from eternity cease to exist? Though a very satisfactory answer to such a question cannot be expected, I may hazard the remark that such an existence might be terminated when deprived of the aliment that sustained it. Is it impossible to conceive that a personality of evil may become effete when he ceases to have a follower? The death of Christ was the diminution of the power of ill as an instance of consummate good, and which had a tendency to attract adherents to Him who gave His life for the benefit of others. Is it impossible to conceive that the universe becoming righteous by faith, the evil one would have no longer a “locus standi”—no place in the nature of things? Fever exists in a town; eventually all the inhabitants are cured or die; whereupon the disease is exterminated by the want of victims. But it may not, perhaps, be necessary to insist on the extirpation of the evil power. Enough if he be rendered helpless by the destruction of his works. In Rev. xx. 10, he is cast into the lake of fire to be tormented for ever and ever. If the word

“ever” is to be taken literally, the person who is tormented must always exist, and the torment may consist in the constant contemplation of his defeat. When in Heb. ii. 14, it is stated that he who has the power of death will be destroyed, the verb used is *καταργέω*; which primarily means “leave unemployed,” make barren or useless; and so in place of “destroy” we may read “abolish the influence of.”

Could we imagine the condemned in hell won over to Christ, then the great contest between good and evil would cease. Christ, as we are told by St. Peter, descended to preach to the spirits in prison; and that process could be repeated indefinitely so as to embrace all the disobedient in all times. But to pursue this argument would open out the vexed question of the eternity of punishment. On this subject I would only remark that if it be difficult to conceive of a future time having no end—as it confessedly is—it is still more difficult to conceive of a punishment co-existent with it—punishment by a God whose very name is Love, and whose foreknowledge is perfect. I limit myself to citing merely those passages in the Bible which shadow forth the cessation

of a penal retribution which, whatever its nature, would, if indefinitely prolonged, degenerate into a vengeance that man could not inflict, and, surely, would not if he could.

In Eph. i. 10, we are told that God will, *in the fulness of time*, gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth. Though this may not include those already condemned, it at least prefigures a very general union of human kind under one head. In Col. i. 20, we read, "It pleased the Father to reconcile *all* things unto Himself." In Rom. v. 18, "By the righteousness of one the free gift came unto all men unto justification of life." In 1 Cor. xv. 22, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." In Rom. x. 13, "*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." With reference to these passages it may be objected that men are only put into a state of salvation which is attainable only on certain conditions; but, in the first place, these conditions could be only those of a peculiarly spiritual fitness which the Almighty *can* bestow on all now, or in "the fulness of time." Though no conditions are imposed by the words of Scripture, I will assume them to be

necessary, and as Revelation states that God would wish all men to be saved (a fact that our own reason and conscience would suggest as probable), we can hardly suppose that the Creator would withhold the means of carrying out His own intention. And which supposition is the more consonant with His power and dignity, that His expressed wish should be eventually fulfilled, or should never come to pass? Not only is He spoken of as above as the God who will have all men to be saved (thus far confirming the doctrine of universal salvation); but in the same epistle, 1 Tim. ii. 4, He is described as "The Saviour of *all* men, *specially* of those that believe." The doctrine here preached seems very clear and unqualified; and it is remarkable in the passage last quoted that they who believe ~~not~~ are distinguished from those who do, and yet they are represented as saved. How much more, so to speak, will believers be saved? The salvation granted to the former may be of a different nature or degree from that vouchsafed to those peculiarly selected for it; but it would be an unauthorized interpretation of the words that would sanction such an argument as "that all" men means only those

few whom God chooses. What if God chooses all? I protest against the attempt to gloss away the plain meaning of words according to which "will" does not mean "will," and "all" is something very different from "all." What advantage can the Scriptures be to plain persons if they cannot understand them till explained by an expert?—not to mention that experts themselves differ greatly. In the case before us there can be no limitation except that the "all" to be saved must come to a knowledge of the truth—but does God will them to be saved, and not likewise will that they should arrive at that knowledge? Finally, I ask from *what* does God wish all men to be saved? I answer, from deserting Him for another. What idea do we form of hell? Not surely as a place of protracted physical torture, but as one where the punishment will consist in the exclusion from God's presence and from His love; where to each spiritual recreant the flame of imagining better things will not be quenched, and the worm of regret will never die.

If it be alleged that the preceding argument regarding the decadence and subjection of evil goes too far; and that we may on the

same grounds maintain the possibility of the good Being ceasing to exist, or to exist without power, on the supposition of all the universe becoming wicked, it may be replied that in good there is an inherent vitality, which is not in evil. Good is love, peace, and harmony ; and possesses a moral nature which can never be destroyed unless these principles be corrupted, an event which it is the constant endeavour of the evil one to bring to pass. Evil, on the contrary, contains in itself the elements of its own dissolution—hatred, jealousy, and disunion. They may take a long time to work their end, but, at last, the antagonism with their kind which exists in evil natures must exert a dissolving influence. If I say that good is, in itself, eternal, and you observe that it may be corrupted and perish, you grant that evil is the cause of failure and decay. Nor, in the case supposed is it the good that is destroyed while being good, but it loses its nature before ceasing to be. When evil perishes it does so as evil without any transmutation of being. In like manner peace is eternal unless it be broken by the evil of war. Health, and life itself, are eternal until their properties are

interfered with by that which is in itself evil, the advent of disease, or the decay or disarrangement of parts, abridging a pleasure or frustrating a plan. But disease and war themselves must be limited in duration, not by the superinduction of a foreign nature, but because they exhaust their existence by annihilating their objects.

Again, if we can trust Revelation, there is a difference in the relative power of the good and evil principles without reference to its statements that the evil will eventually succumb. How this distinction is possible between two originally independent principles, I need not attempt to explain. But, if the two were equal, they would divide the world with a fluctuating equality, which seems very much the case at present, though evil has the wider rule. It has, however, less essential vitality than good : the office of the latter is to create, that of the former to disturb. To return to the Scriptures. The evil power is represented as the tempter and accuser of men, being unable, as it were, to claim any one as a subject before giving proof of his being so. Here are elements of inferiority ; but, of course, only they who acknowledge the

sacred character of these writings will listen to their assertion that greater is He that is in them (the followers of Christ) and influencing for good ; than he that is in the world, and tempting to evil. But even the thinking unbeliever must allow the great extent to which good is kept alive by being recognized more largely even than it is practised—a fact which shadows forth its ultimate prevalence over its opposite. If the case be not so, whence come the attempts made by men with a conscience, though not with the faith of a Christian, to benefit their species in a variety of ways—in healing diseases, in prolonging life by sanitary experiments, in overcoming the too common hunger and thirst after evil by a well-tested moral nutrition ? Who ever heard of an hospital for the dissemination of disease, or of a school for teaching vice for its own sake merely, and apart from any gain it might bring—gain direct, tangible and temporary ? But morality, for instance, would not be taught for such an end, but for its own intrinsic excellence, independently of the rewards that might possibly accompany it in an imperfect world. Here is a confession of what is right, and an implied rejection of that which is wrong.

The result, then, appears to be a general repudiation of evil ; a struggle against it, either direct or inferential, even by evil men. To say that this state of things arises from simple humanity or benevolence, is an insufficient explanation ; for the chief actors in such transactions need not always be benevolent or humane. They may be influenced by a variety of motives ; but whatever the true explanation, the facts show that good is in the ascendant when its claims are recognized, and its empire advanced. Evil has no such advantages ; it boasts of no open advocacy, and its triumphs are the mere negation of good. Even a cold-hearted man may feel a pride in opposing it ; and the many who follow the worse, yet in their thoughts do homage to the better. It is not enough to say that in the practical confession of good the generality merely follow a lead. If they follow, the leaders must be in a majority of some kind, either of numbers or of right. As it cannot be one of numbers, it must be one of right, and so will make it hopeful of eventual victory. If, in the prosecution of good, public opinion compels, or the hope of praise allures, the praise and the

opinion must be strong enough and wide enough to produce the effects in question. Nothing is more curious than the restraint imposed by "public opinion" upon the "workers of iniquity." If not the homage which vice pays to virtue, it is, at least, an indirect recognition of its authority ; it is like an involuntary voice protesting in favour of the good : a small voice which will, in time, culminate into the thunder of an assenting world.

The evil power, as delineated in the New Testament, has, as before stated, all the attributes of divinity, whether or no these be inherent or lent. It must be omnipresent, for it can exert its influence in all the world at one and the same time. It can look into and sway the human heart by its own action. It can impede, not frustrate, God's designs ; for He will have all men to be saved. Yet we are told that few only enter in at the strait gate ; few only, it may be surmised, at present, till the time come when innumerable crowds shall storm the approaches, and the delay imposed by wickedness shall cease, and the great and good One be all in all.

It would not be justifiable to call this

theory Manichæan, because it has one point in a measure the same with it, while it differs in all others. Manichæus took extreme liberties with the sacred writings, and among others he rejected the whole of the Old Testament, and the Acts of the Apostles in the New. He denied the fact of the gospels being written till after the time of their reputed authors. He supposed that Christ had no real body to suffer on the cross, and to rise again after death. Whether he believed in two actual Gods, does not seem clear ; but he held the principle of matter to be eternal ; as also that the three persons of the Trinity were not co-equal, placing the Second Person in the sun and moon, and the Holy Spirit in the air. Augustin maintained that Manichæus did worship two Gods, which the other denied ; but, as before said, the fact of his representing matter as self-existent, and as being the Supreme Evil, as well as saying that *something*, whether inherent in itself, or external to it, could convert it into evil activities, assimilates his doctrine to a duality of deity. Augustin's words are, "If the Manichæans called matter a substance purely passive, they did not hold two Gods.

But if they attributed to some other intelligent principle than God the power to resolve matter into elements, and to make out of it bodies and animals, they acknowledge two Gods, for they gave to this principle a power belonging to God only." I may here notice that Augustin himself was, in early life, a Manichæan ; but was possibly deterred subsequently from adopting any of the principles of that sect, by the many speculative absurdities with which their founder overlaid whatever was true in the doctrine he taught, and died for. As regards my own theory, I accept the Scriptures in their integrity. That theory I give up if not consonant with them.

It is a remark of Irenæus that to constitute two Gods is to detract from the perfections of one or both. Without stopping to consider how the doctrine of the Trinity bears upon this opinion, I would say that the notion, if true, makes a conflict between the two powers unavoidable, and the victory of one over the other certain. In such a contest time can have no part; and whether it be protracted for years, or ages upon ages, makes no difference in the result. The conflict which I have

supposed to ensue from the hypothesis is what we in fact witness in the world, viz., the apparently never-ceasing antagonism between good and evil. A warfare on such a scale, and between such adversaries, must be conceived to have a limit. We cannot imagine that it, more than an earthly conflict, could be carried on for eternity. With a clear idea of that which leads to subjection to either of the competing powers, we may form a notion as to the one with whom the victory will rest. In the world as it now is, evil has the mastery. The truth is, that in as far as men are not faultless, all are subjects of the evil principle, and are only redeemed from this servitude by a confession of unworthiness, and a profession of the allegiance of faith. Of such persons David is the type—a man with a thousand faults, and one saving virtue. So, perhaps, when the sinners of all ages shall be inspired to cry out “Father! we have sinned against heaven and Thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy sons,” then the chains of darkness may fall off from the spirits in prison, and the empire of light become co-extensive with creation.

It is certainly difficult to conceive, in all its

relations and consequences, the idea of two such powers as I have described. But is it not as difficult to conceive a Trinity which is nevertheless an established doctrine? The *explanations* of a Triune God generally savour of Sabellianism, as, for instance, when the mystery is illustrated by the granted fact of man having a body, a soul, and a spirit, which are merely properties of one and the same person. On the supposition of two divinities the powers are difficult and conflicting, and this state of things corresponds with what is met with in the world. In the former case they are eternally similar and harmonious, to which the world can show nothing of an analogous nature; for we have three supreme persons working without deviation to the same identical ends, and still only one God. Heresy alone hints that the three persons may be resolved into the attributes of a single Being.

It is, doubtless, difficult to comprehend how an uncreated Intelligence can cease to exist; but is it more so than to conceive one eternity shorter or longer than another? But if God exists from eternity, he could have created from eternity, and yet the Creator

must be anterior to the created ; the begotten Son must be posterior to the Father.

To say that the reason of our failure in the explanation of evil may be sought in our limited knowledge bars inquiry by its generality. Evil may be good if we could see it in all its relations ; but such a theory would confound all exactness of thought, and distinction of action. With regard to the *destruction* of the "spiritual wickedness in high places," it is not necessary, perhaps, as I have before stated, to assume this. It may be sufficient to believe in the eventually permanent limitation of his power, and the abrogation of his influence. It is possible to interpret the Biblical texts which refer to the subject, so as to sanction this supposition. The picture of Milton's Satan, enthroned above his fellows, amid

"The burning aristocracy of hell,"

conveys a greater idea of congenial happiness than of the same potentate seated in solitary gloom, and miserable because inactive.



CHAPTER VI.



BEFORE considering how He who, being without sin, suffered for sin, is connected with my present subject, I would glance at the arguments which have been adduced against the existence of an evil personality. I will take the objections which have been brought forward by a Protestant clergyman, the Rev. A. Reville, as an example of the rest, though it is, I daresay, possible to produce reasonings of a more cogent nature than his.¹ Still his small work may be looked on as a representative one, as it has been translated, circulated, and favourably reviewed. With reference to some assertions in the volume, I venture to remark that I do not understand how belief

¹ "History of the Devil," &c. Translated into English. Williams and Norgate.

in the devil can interfere with belief in the wisdom of God, unless we suppose that the former being was created by Him, in order to oppose Himself and mislead men. Nor can it interfere with belief in man's free will more than does the existence of ordinary evil, however caused, and which does and must influence the wills of all men. If free will be compatible with the power and foreknowledge of the Good Being, it may be preserved from being injuriously affected by the existence of these same attributes in the evil one.

In cases, likewise, where this belief is held to be no check upon bad men, such an event can only happen when their belief is unfixed, or does not include the great power and wisdom of the being they fear, and yet hope to outwit. In how many cases, moreover, does the belief in a God fail to retain men in the path wherein, to be consistent, they ought to walk ?

Again, to suppose that Christ, when speaking of the devil, merely accommodates His language to popular notions on the subject, is to put into his mouth words in which He did not Himself believe, and which were calculated to mislead others. If His language

in this matter describes as fact what He knew not to be fact, how can we discern when He is enunciating literal truth? Such a theory, from its very improbability, goes far toward conceding the point to which it is opposed. How, too, can the author reconcile it with the dignity and perfect character of Christ?

The argument that those who believe in Satan live as if they had no such belief, surely deserves no consideration. If the truth of a doctrine is to be tested by the corresponding actions of those who hold it, I fear that none would abide the test. Are not professed believers in God chargeable with leading unsuitable lives; and should we therefore say that their profession of faith has no influence, except it be an evil one, on their conduct? We ought therefore to infer, according to the author's mode of reasoning, that belief in God is a delusion.

Referring to the same publication; if we compare 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, with 1 Chron. xxi. 1, we shall find it stated in the first authority that God incites David to number Israel, whereas in the second passage the same act is attributed to Satan. Hence it is concluded

that from the interval of time elapsed it was thought right to ascribe to Satan what was before ascribed to God. Some explanation of the passage is necessary, or it might be contended that it represents God and Satan as the same; but the present writer states that the inference from it is that, from the interval of time elapsed, it was thought right to ascribe to Satan what was before ascribed to God. Hence it is concluded that the belief in an evil power was a growing one, and that consequently such a Being was but the creation of the human mind. But how does a growing belief in any being militate against the fact of his existence? Is not that fact made more probable by the circumstance that the belief has acquired strength with the progress of experience and thought? Is there no God because He existed ages before there was a general belief in His being and attributes; and because such a belief grew clearer with the advance of time and knowledge?

The Rev. Dr. Reville remarks that Jesus nowhere makes belief in the devil a condition of admission into the kingdom of God. He does not do so directly, but He warns men against the power and subtlety of Satan, so

that whosoever is overcome by him cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. To caution his followers against the snares of the devil is, of course, to impose on them a belief in his existence. The same author also argues that purity of heart, and love of God and man, &c., are entirely independent of the question whether Satan exists or not. This is palpably assuming the point in dispute. If he exists not, then he, of course, is in no wise connected with the question. If he *does* exist as a Personal Evil Power, the above and all other virtues are, of necessity, largely dependent upon him, through the ability he possesses to impede their exercise. Again the reverend writer gives it as his opinion that our evil thoughts come from our hearts, and that there is *therefore* no devil. This argument, so to call it, completely begs the question to be proved by taking it for granted that there is no devil by whom men's hearts are influenced. As well might I maintain that in the case of an ordinary clock, the sole power that moves the wheels is the descending weight, and altogether ignore a central attraction upon the weight, and the unseen influence of gravitation.

Further on Dr. Reville writes (pp. 40, 41) : "Through seeing Satan everywhere, a familiarity with him was engendered. It was thought by no means impossible to turn his stupidity to account. What laughter his scrapes excited among the good folks!" It is very strange that any writer arguing against the existence of an Evil Power can think to advance his cause by bringing forward such statements as these. His reasoning in fact amounts to this—because the popular devil is an absurd and incredible being, therefore there is no devil of any kind. As well might he point to some hideous idol claiming a large class of worshippers, and cry out, 'See what God is! Who can believe in him?'"

Subsequently he speaks (p. 44) of the horrid hunting for witches in the fifteenth and following century, which he asserts sprang from belief in the devil, and that when the former succumbed to more enlightened opinion, the latter perished too. It would be better to say that when the cause (belief in Satan) declined, the effect diminished likewise. But the persecution of supposed witches could only arise from wrong notions of the

devil, as persecutions of another kind have arisen from wrong notions of God. We should have heard less of the Inquisition, had the aforesaid notions not have been entertained, and they would never have been entertained had there been no belief in God. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, he may discredit the existence of God. The whole argument is not so good as it would be to infer the certainty of the devil's existence from the weakness of the objections against it. In tracing the decadence of Satan, or rather of belief in his being, it is apparent that disbelief in him was, in a great measure, contemporaneous with disbelief, or merely conventional belief in Christianity itself.

The same writer (p. 67) states that "belief in the devil necessarily tends to blunt the sense of individual culpability;" and in the next page he adds, "The truth is, the devil is ridiculous." If the devil be a ridiculous fable, how can belief in such a farce blunt the sense of responsibility? The man whose sense is so blunted must not only believe in the fiend's power to corrupt and mislead, but he must also feel that, however wicked he may become under such influence, the evil one alone, and

not he himself, will be made answerable for his sins. That is, if a friend should tempt me to commit murder, or any other crime, he will suffer for it, and not I. Such a doctrine seems more ridiculous than the devil himself. A belief in a personal and powerful evil being must have an influence on the formation of character by the allurements to good; and this through fear of the consequences likely to result from the submission to evil.

We go on to read in p. 68: "If there is a devil there must be wizards; but there are no wizards; therefore there is no devil." I can conceive of no statement more illogical. Why assume that there must be "wizards?" If there be a devil there will almost certainly be *bad men*. Are there no bad men? Or there will very probably be men *accused* of having dealings with Satan,—in other words, of being wizards. If there be an evil power, such as I have supposed to exist, there would, doubtless, be no wizards holding open intercourse with him, and making compacts with him, and working wonders in his name, and so subjecting themselves to persecutions and death. The evil being's purposes would be far better served by influencing the *hearts*

of his victims, and freeing them from the fear of all immediate consequences of their submission to his dictates.

In p. 72 of his treatise, Dr. Reville, in alluding to the great corruption of our nature, concedes that there is a sense in which we may be said to be "possessed." Did we come from the hands of the Creator in this condition? Or did he form man perfect, but with liability to evil, in order that He might bring good out of it? First good, then bad, then good again? What, in fact, is the offending Adam in us? Is it our partaking of Adam's sinful nature, and then its further corruption by mixing with other sinners like ourselves—society, as it is called? Worms are said to be latent in the human body, and which death vivifies,—but how did the worms get there? So certain principles may be latent in the soul, to be developed in time by circumstances. It is not the man who offends but the sin that dwelleth in him. Can it be God who sows the bad seed? Can we conceive Him as the Author of sin? Tendencies to evil, bad society, &c., are terms expressing an existent condition of things, but throw not the very faintest light on its origin. If a man

has typhus fever, should we rest contented with a knowledge of the fact, and not seek to discover how he caught it, or how he may get rid of it? Especially we might consider that some acquaintance with its origin would assist its cure, and help to prevent its diffusion.

I should wish to give all honest consideration to opinions different from my own, but I confess to being unable to find anything in the Rev. A. Reville's book of the nature of an argument, but only a short historical view of the subject which proves nothing, or, at least, would only convince those whose convictions were already settled. Can those who advocate his opinions produce no better elucidation of them?

I proceed, with due humility and reverence, to consider the character and office of Christ as connected with the matter before us. Christians at least believe in the original divinity of their Saviour. They believe that He, in some way or sort, divested Himself of His Godhead, and took upon Him the form and passions of a man. They believe that He was executed on a cross to save the human race from ruin or condemnation of some description, though they might differ as

to its exact kind or degree. They cannot refuse to follow out their belief, however vague and unstable, by acknowledging that such an action on the part of the second person of the Trinity must have originated in some very powerful motive,—I might almost say, in some great necessity. Believers in general are content with repeating a formula, such as, “Christ died to save us from our sins,” “His death became our life,” &c. Faith, certainly, may rest here, but its rest would be less liable to disturbance if it could form some definite idea of *how* the salvation it trusts in is worked.

Many learned systems for explaining the atonement acknowledge and magnify the Evil Power. Origen and St. Augustine held that the ransom price of man was paid to the devil, and not to God. Gregory of Nyssa supposed that the devil accepted this ransom, but, not recognizing Christ’s divinity, was imposed upon and deluded. Surely the authors of such theories must, to be consistent, concede the inherent divinity of the Being they represent as contending with God. Other systems, if not expressly defining the action of the devil, do so by implication in

regarding him as the author of all sin, for which satisfaction was to be made. Sin is the violation of the divine law, whether written in the heart, or on tables of stone. Now God, in creating man, either knew or did not know that he would sin. If He did not know, His knowledge was imperfect; if He did know, He either could not prevent his sinning, for some reason, perhaps temporary, or thought fit to allow it. Viewed in any way, the offence of man is all but compulsory, being committed at the instigation of a being infinitely higher than himself, or with the sufferance of another Being still more exalted. Call sin ignorance, and I ask whether God could not have enlightened the offender with a conscience that could not be resisted; but He did not; and having left him to transgress, provided a remedy of unimaginable costliness. If there had been no extraordinary opposition to His will, His first method would have been far the simpler and more effective; while the adoption of the latter, which was the assimilation to the divine nature, shows what was the character of the offence, viz., rebellion against God as the *moral* ruler of the universe.

Take the case of the woman who washed the feet of Jesus. Her sins were forgiven apparently because Christ foresaw that she would love much. But the Pharisee, possibly a better moral character, was rejected for his want of love. Love then of God, or of Christ, which is the taking on of the divine nature, is the essential of Christianity. But can this love (as above) be only foreseen—can it not also be caused by Christ? And if caused in some, why not in others—in all? The incarnations of deity in different heathen nations had evil to contend with; but they did not originate good in the heart: they took human nature as they found it. Christ, surely, can do more than this, though he does not touch *every* heart with his influence. He leaves the decision to the man's self; to follow Him if He be God, and if Baal be God, to follow him. Consider the case of the sower who sowed in the ground where he knew the seed would not spring up; or, can we possibly think that he was ignorant whether it would or not; or, at least, deemed it right or necessary to give it a *chance* of growth? In any case it appears that an offer of salvation must be made to every man, even to him who will certainly

refuse it, and who will not be put under any moral compulsion to act otherwise. Again, according to the passage in Matt. xi. 20-24, Sodom would have repented if the gospel had been preached to it. Did it matter or not whether it repented ; and if it would have been better for it to have repented, why was it not blessed with the equivalent of gospel teaching ? The case of Judæa was worse, for it heard, and remained faithless and disbelieving, an instance of the seed sown in unproductive ground. I cannot comprehend how it is possible to draw any meaning whatever from passages like these where a Divine Power is represented as wishing to perform certain acts and yet does not perform them without calling in, by way of explanation, the existence of some vast obstructive influence, whatever that may be.

There are so many ways of viewing the atonement that it may be asked what shall the unlearned do to form a judgment in a matter of such importance, regarding which some sort of judgment is indispensable ? The best answer is, that salvation by the Gospel scheme cannot be made a matter of learning—not many wise are called. It is better, we

know, to be a doer of the law than a mere hearer of it; though an intelligent one, and the most ignorant may imitate Him who offered His Son for a sacrifice in His supreme character of love. Let him love his neighbour, and he will find that difficult enough to do, without attempting to fathom the deep points of the law, whose sole aim is to inculcate an affectionate reverence for God and God's created things. The theory that God so hates sin that He expended His wrath for sin on His only Son may be so far rejected as it is inconsistent with the character of Him who is perfect benevolence. His omniscience would tell Him that in creating man He created a being who would CERTAINLY offend, and so excite that wrath which could only be appeased at such a cost. God, therefore, according to this really childish theory, ordained things so as ultimately to arouse his own anger. A mere mortal is only angry when he finds things turn out differently from what he had expected. Deity foreknows eternally whatever will occur. Now if God be absolute love, the salvation of man must be the result of that love, and any interpretation of the atonement must rest on this fact. He so loved the world (not was

angry with the world) that He sent His Son to suffer for its benefit. As is the master so should be the servant, and as, therefore, the kingdom of the evil one consists in having followers like himself, so the kingdom of God—or Christ—is founded on securing the allegiance of those who resemble Him in nature, and in corresponding conduct.

In Col. i. 20-21, and in 2 Cor. v. 18, &c., we read that it pleased the Father to reconcile all things to Himself by the blood of the cross—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; and so, in all passages of the New Testament, the expressions which refer to the atonement dwell on the idea of man being reconciled to God, never of God being reconciled to man; showing that God had no quarrel with the sinner save what the sinner chose to make, and that the simple and only way of making peace between earth and Heaven was by accepting God's offer of becoming holy in and through Christ. If this be a true account of the great reconciliation, it is an important one, inasfar as understanding the meaning of what is written is requisite for an intelligent faith. The atonement supposes nothing new in God; for

change, whether for better or worse, denotes imperfection. The change consists in man's adoption into the divine nature, not in God's wrath against man being appeased by any possible arrangement. God, we are told, would have man to be saved ; if He does not impart to him saving qualities sufficient for the purpose, He cannot feel anger—He may feel pity that the creature has chosen the service of His enemy, in preference to that of Himself.

Christ was both descendant and father of Adam ; the one as man, and the other as Eternal God. As, therefore, the first man transmitted his sinful nature to his descendants, in like manner Christ imparts His nature not *only* to those born after Him, but to those likewise existent before Him in the flesh. For the good of all ages are His children in a partial sense, to be completed when the revelation to them of the perfect man enables them to be *one* with him, through the instrumentality of faith. According to the apostle (1 Peter iii. 19) Christ revealed Himself to the souls of the disobedient, and we may suppose that all such as had it not then will hereafter receive the necessary enlightenment.

It will be granted by all classes, whether Christian or sceptic, that the character of Christ is perfect, being that of one who never sinned, and, at the same time it is by no means an insipid one. Still further, most persons will bear away from a perusal of His sayings and conduct the idea of a Being who had the power to sin, but could not conceivably exercise it. To say that He *could* not sin is to deprive Him of all pretention to merit when clothed with humanity, and therefore to destroy the efficacy of His atonement as making the world holy through faith. For God, as essential love, would will to redeem the nature of man, and restore it to its original purity, by transferring into it the nature of His immaculate Son. No amount of moral instruction, no imparting of the Holy Spirit Himself, could make a human creature as perfect in all points as His Redeemer. And yet it is necessary that in some, and limited relations, he should be so. This can only be effected by becoming one with Christ in nature (not in character); and this man has power to bring about by professing a thorough trust in his great Leader, which, though it may not insure perfect obedience, becomes an

act of allegiance against the common enemy. His spirit enters into a union with Christ's in a spiritual warfare. As long as he holds to his attachment, and discards all self-reliance, he is only strengthened by weakness, and emboldened by failure. Something of a similar description may be observed in human life in the case of two lovers who, though distinct in character, and far separate in body, may be one in soul, so that by the interchange of loving thought there ensues an absolute contact of their spiritual natures. In like manner then may the divine nature be united to the human, for in that case there would be no hindrance of intervening space, though a vast difference of excellency. A particle of matter, however minute and insignificant in itself, may be taken into the system, and assimilated to form a certain and definite portion of the body, to which it bears no outward resemblance, but with which it combines in contest with the evils and accidents of life. "At that day," says Christ, "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.)

We are made holy by Christ's nature being taken into ours, and therefore it is necessary

that He should be made like His brethren in all things in order that He may become one with them. In this we may find the explanation of His horror in drinking the cup which He was sent into the world by His Father to drink. Though perfectly innocent Himself, He was not thereby prevented from feeling the effects of sin in others—in fact, in a world—as much as if He too had been a sinner. The divinity in Him could not transgress, but the man could sympathize. An analogous case may be found in earthly life when a brother sorrows deeply for a brother's offences, and, being one soul with him, comes into immediate contact with his impurities and his wickednesses. *He* has not been guilty of them, but they exist within him by the compulsion of love as if *he* had been the offender, and the feeling is intensified by a shuddering sense of the momentous consequences. It was by such sufferings that Christ was rendered perfect, rather, perhaps, than by the scourging and the crown of thorns, and the agony of the cross.

It was requisite that Christ should be perfect man—the son of man emphatically—and unlike His brethren in the one point of abso-

lute holiness. In this character He had the power of assimilating unto Himself all who were chosen for this high privilege ; and when transformed they were redeemed by that simple act of union from him who had the power of death. The human nature could not be destructively absorbed into the divinity that was in the nature of Christ, for if so He would have ceased to be man, and the redemption of the human race would not have been effected. It was imperative that Christ should be man to make that redemption possible. It was also imperative that He should be perfect man to make the assimilation of nature sufficient for His purpose, a purpose that could not be gained by the combination of the human being with the pure Godhead, seeing that men must be saved or condemned as being what they were created, and not as being something incomparably higher and more excellent. Accordingly we find Christ growing in wisdom. If He grew in anything He was not at the time perfect in that thing. His own words were, "The Son knows not the hour." He also exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was not the exclamation

of unmixed Godhead. And so again, "If it be possible, save me from this hour." In the Greek of the Gospel He is said to have "emptied" Himself of His glory, and so He does not appear to have worked His miracles by His own inherent power, for He says, "If I by the *Spirit* of God cast out devils," &c.; — and again in John xi. 41, &c., "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me." Still more distinctly, according to the same Evangelist, v. 19, he declares, "The Son can do nothing of Himself." In verses 26 and 27, "The Father hath given the Son to have life in Himself, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment," &c., and finally in verse 30, "I can of mine own self do nothing." I may add that absolute and exclusive Deity could not be tempted, nor be a sacrifice for man in the true sense of saving him by making him *one* with Himself. No words, moreover, are more often repeated by Christ than such as "Him that sent Me." "The doctrine is not mine but His that sent Me;" and yet He distinctly affirms "I and My Father are one."

The conclusion that seems to force itself on us is, that God the Son *divested* Himself of His divinity, and appearing on earth was

inspired by the Spirit, or retained a sufficient portion of the Godhead which he had with the Father, so as to become fitted in all things for His mission. He was inferior to the Father as touching His position or power on earth ; but one with Him in as far as He had at any time power to lay down the humanity He had assumed and to take up again the complete deity which He had laid down. If we cannot explain how all this was effected, we need not *therefore* dispute the fact. We do not refuse to acknowledge the genius of Shakespeare or of Newton because we cannot account for their intellectual eminence, but rest contented with knowing its mere existence and admiring its products. Very common among nations is a belief in the incarnation of deity, though that deity in the flesh may be morally worse than the people he comes to redeem. The peculiarity of the Christian Saviour is His perfect obedience to the moral law while living. His death, too, was necessary to show that He was man. The manner and cause of His death—dying rather than preserve life by yielding to the influences which the evil one had arrayed against him, and seeking no other

recompense of reward than the fulfilment of his office, and the "Well done! In thee I am well pleased" of the Father—these, I say, were necessary to that absolute holiness in which the powers of darkness could discover no flaw, no chink in the armour of light.

I pass over the doctrine of the Patripassians. It seems to me an absurdity to suppose that the Almighty Father suffered on the cross. As pure God He could not suffer in any way, and His death is not possible, for creation could not survive the momentary extinction of Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

Two natures are conceivable in Christ. Firstly, the Divine Spirit may have animated a man for the purpose required; secondly, the Deity may for a time have discarded His divine nature, in whole or in part. The first supposition rests on inferences from things said, done, or recorded in the inspired writings; the second upon direct assertions. Such passages as, "Christ *was* God, and was with God," "He took on Him the form of a servant," &c., certainly denote a descent from a greater height. The second supposition moreover seems, in one sense at

least, more maintainable than the first, independently of its confirmation by texts of Scripture, inasmuch as the victory over evil would be more to the glory of God if gained by Deity veiled in human form, than by humanity divinely inspired. The case would resemble that of the general of an army himself winning a battle, instead of its being gained by one of his subordinates. Nor does it seem that a man, instructed for the purpose, would be sufficient for such a contest. A being possessing originally all perfection, seems stronger when taking on manhood, than a man divinely informed. The former *could* not part with its perfections ; the other might do so, conceivably, as losing what was not inherent in his nature.

With reference to the comparative probabilities of these two suppositions, it may be said, with justice, that both are equally difficult of acceptance as far as a full and satisfactory explanation of the matters involved in them is concerned ; but that alone furnishes no reason why either may not be received as fact. When there exists good evidence of the truth of an assertion, it may be worthy of credence—may at least be sub-

mitted to belief—unless the thing asserted be inconceivable. Can we understand rightly—rather, perhaps, at all—why or how one man is better than another, has more of God's spirit in him than his neighbour? Yet we unhesitatingly acknowledge that he has. And had we never even seen two men of this description we should have no difficulty in granting the possibility of such an occurrence. We may *conceive* a man living with more than one head on his shoulders; although, if the most truth-telling of human beings were to assert that he had seen a creature of the sort, his best friend would not believe him. We may conceive an intellect that could never be made to comprehend that a whole is necessarily larger than its part; but not one that could discover the means of producing perpetual motion with the qualities of matter remaining as they at present are. We can only assert absolute disbelief of things which are inconceivable, as being contradictory in themselves. From among propositions which are not rigidly demonstrable, we naturally accept the one which has the most probability, although unable to solve all the difficulties attending it.

We can, and most do, believe in the possibility of a spirit which exists everywhere. If one good man has within him a fuller inspiration than a second less good, this spirit must exist in greater degree in one place than in another. It can concentrate itself, and therefore reduce itself to any point short of utter annihilation. So Christ was man ; not man created, but reduced to that condition, and supplied, not with an infinitesimal portion of the divine afflatus, but with as much as fitted Him in all respects for his office, and which yet did not deprive Him of His strict humanity, more than it does an ordinary human being in whom it is largely existent. In this latter case the spiritual influence works, as stated in Acts xv. 9, by purifying the man's heart by faith ; meaning that he is absolved from guilt by the belief that makes him of one nature with his great Exemplar.





CHAPTER VII.



AN inquirer may naturally ask what advantage would arise from the doctrine, if true, which I have ventured to advocate. I answer that it would serve to give a definite form to men's ideas when debating whether to lead a good or an evil life ; or if, as is probable, they might be tempted to follow their own inclinations without much debate in the matter, it would serve as a strong auxiliary to conscience in giving *precision* to their ideas of the consequences of whatever course they adopted. At present most of them have but very unsettled notions of what is likely to follow a life of sin. They may perhaps be liable, they think, to some sort of punishment ; but then God is all-merciful—He delights in mercy—they have His word for it. Why

then should He not freely pardon? But on the supposition that they believe themselves to be the subject of a contest between two opposing powers, they would reflect more before committing themselves to action, and their thoughts would have the greater earnestness in proportion as they were convinced that the evil one striving to possess them was exalted in ability to do so. If they could raise the veil that hides such awful things from vision, and see, embodied in some material shape, the rivalry for power to rule over them for long, if not everlasting, ages, there can be no question that a new element would be introduced to make their course clearer, and to influence their choice. But even if they could certainly and firmly believe the fact, without the aid of ocular proof, faith would be almost as strong a persuasive as sight.

“ Hot for a deed that shames the modest day,
What, wayward sinner ! would thy passion say
If thou could'st pierce the mortal mists that hide
A shape of lurid grandeur by thy side,
Signing thee on to snatch the adulterous kiss,
And pawn salvation for a passing bliss? ”

Such men might be led to perceive that God, though delighting in mercy, could not exercise

it here ; that in truth, He would not punish them *directly* for their incurable wickedness, but merely leave them to serve the Chief under whom they had enlisted, and who for his long existence—who can decide how long ?—would exclude all room for repentance by fostering their growth in evil, and making them more and more the children of that hell of which he is the father ? Whether their tortures were of a physical nature or not, they would languish under the terrible torment of having two full and contrasted perceptions of what they are, and what they might have been. Every portion of their past lives would be viewed as an act of allegiance, to one or other of two great inscrutable Beings, together, perhaps, with a persuasion that the Higher and Better One would not utterly desert them, even after their seven times seventy falls, if they only could repent in humility, and in truth—but how to do this *there* and *then* !

Whatever tests our allegiance, only serves to confirm it—if we abide the test. Devotion to a king who has twenty thousand to meet one who comes against him with ten thousand, trusting to some possibility to

compensate the difference, would grow more fervid in the breast of a brave man in the contemplation of battle. Such a man not only fights to justify his choice in the selection of a leader, but also to confirm his judgment by victory. After the conflict he would love his monarch the more for having gone through danger for his sake. The doctrine we are discussing would likewise be of use in the case of a sincere Christian of quick apprehension, but of rather unstable faith. He wishes for satisfaction on some point, some answer either to prayer or action, where he feels assured on all Scriptural principles that his conduct has been right, or his petition authorized. He may be told, and told truly, that God delays His answer in order to try his faith and to strengthen it by trial. Supposing, however, that he does not abide the test (no imaginary case), after the second or third application of it he may sink into a state bordering on despair. But on the further supposition of his becoming assured that his disappointment was owing to the opposition of a great evil power, he would cast off his dejection, and be strengthened for further efforts. He would see a definite and satis-

factory cause for his present want of success—a cause he might hope to overcome—and he would no longer ask himself, complainingly, whether God “had forgotten to be gracious?”

We are told in the Scriptures that whosoever asks for the Spirit of God, it shall certainly be given to him. Now it will, perhaps, be conceded, that many a man has so asked, and has not obtained; asked repeatedly, sincerely, humbly, and at last perhaps despairingly. I shall be told that he did not ask aright; not in faith; not believing that he would receive. I reply that such a condition of mind it is not in his power to acquire of himself, it must be given him from on high. The Father, as is said, must Himself draw him toward the Son. Impressed with this he may have added to his petition another, that he might be taught to pray aright for what was right, to ask with a believing heart. He might still further have beseeched his God to direct his conduct, and make it conformable to his aspirations for good. Perhaps no answer comes. Yet in praying for God's Spirit he must know that he was right in the matter, and, in point of feeling, was anxious to be instructed in whatever was lacking to make

his prayer efficacious. Do you say that he must try again and again until his desire is granted? But he may die before it is granted. Or, do you say that he may have received the gift of the Spirit without knowing it, that he ought to believe he *has* received it? I cannot think but that his ignorance of being in possession of such a gift is practically equivalent to never having received it; while the effect on many minds of an unquestioning belief that what was asked for was granted, would be a self-righteous pride or a persecuting fanaticism. A man so persuaded would not think that others were equally favoured with himself, and this would give rise to a want of sympathy and all uncharitableness.

In passing, I may offer some remarks on the nature of prayer, as connected with my subject. Disputes are many regarding its *efficaciousness*. What is meant by efficaciousness? Turning God from his purpose? A disputant argues, "If you ask God for a certain thing, the chances are that you ask for what may hurt you." I answer that we may ask that it be granted only if good for us. Again he says, "If you ask God as your father, does he not know best what is good for his children?" I reply that the prayer is not uttered in order

to inform Him, but as an acknowledgment that He is our Father, that He and none other is the Sovereign to whom we offer homage. Lastly, he argues, "Do you suppose that He will interfere with His eternal purpose to oblige you?" To this I respond, that God, seeing from all eternity, may have eternally linked the blessing to the prayer.

"Perhaps He breathed, when ancient night held
sway,

The blessing asked by mortal lips to-day,
Which having floated, viewless and sublime,
Upborne by ages through the air of time,
Unshorn by waste, and undisturbed by storm,
Now settles down upon that kneeling form."

But whether this, not original, speculation be true or not, the prayer is a confession that our petition should only be laid at the footstool of His throne, who is our Lord and Master.

Do I then assert that a request for the gift of the Spirit has never, probably, been complied with? Certainly not. Do I say that it has occasionally, during the lifetime of the asker, been denied? Assuredly yes, as far as I can judge. And I assume that in such a case can be traced the presence of the power of darkness to interrupt the trans-

mission of light. This fact can scarcely be doubted by anyone who admits the ability of the evil one to take the seed sown out of the heart of the weak believer. It would, however, be impossible to follow out all the complications of such a subject. Yet one thing seems clear—viz., the endeavour of a mysterious influence to instil a doubt of the truth of the statement, "Hath God said it, and shall He not do it?" But let the unsuccessful suppliant believe in the influence that has delayed the fulfilment of a divine promise—a delay that may outlast a life—and the fainting heart will be reassured, and the courage be exalted to do battle for the omnipotent—omnipotent because in the end prevailing over all opposition, and silencing all doubt. God, being self-existent, must be absolutely omnipotent unless He be opposed by a great independent power; and this supposition only limits His omnipotence, as I have endeavoured to explain, by the element of time—if that be a limit. It would be absurd, on the other hand, to say that God is not almighty because He cannot bring back yesterday, or perform a mathematical impossibility. Not quite as impossible, perhaps,

as it is to make man good. This can only be effected through the love of Christ shown actively in the keeping His commandments. They who deny His divinity cannot impugn the excellency of that teaching which inculcates the love of our neighbour as well as that of our God. Be it said that no man can turn his cheek to the smiter, but if all were of the spirit enjoined, there would be none to smite. If there be an evil being, how *can* he act but by the inspiration of hate?

To all who reject Christianity, many of my words will be but as the idle wind; but to the Christian believer, the hypothesis I have maintained should not appear improbable, for he is constantly warned against the enemy of mankind who is ever on the watch to originate evil and intercept good; and against whose artifices the accepted servants of Heaven must necessarily make use of all the safeguards which that heaven provides for them. Does any objector reply that such a view of the evil one foiling the endeavours of him who strives to enter the kingdom of Heaven, and which efforts are prompted by its king, detracts from the sovereignty of the good Ruler himself? I can only affirm that

such at least is the account that the Scriptures, which are written for our learning, unmistakably give us ; and I would further venture to remark, in addition to what I have above said on the omnipotence of God, that it no more detracts from His sovereignty than does the passage of the Bible (1 Tim. ii. 4) which tells us that God will have *all* men to be saved, combined with the Scriptural statement that there be *few* only who enter in at the strait gate which leads to salvation. (Matt. vii. 14.) "*Strive* to enter in" is the teaching. Where there is strife there is difficulty, view it as we like and from whatever cause arising, in carrying out the purposes of the Almighty. If words mean anything, they surely mean here that there is an interference for the time, with His will. The "mystery of iniquity" is a Biblical expression denoting that there is some powerful and deep-hidden cause for the condition of the moral world. In the days when the Epistle to the Thessalonians was written, the writer considered not only that this "mystery" was successful in its work of obstruction, but that its power in that respect was on the increase. Doubtless God will vindicate Him-

self in the end ; but how great must be the power of that existence which can oppose the Omnipotent for the least conceivable portion of time ? Could this be a mere created angel ? If so, did God create him foreseeing (as he must have done) how he would act ; and with the object also (for the Divine pre-science is equivalent to causation) that he should thwart, in a measure, His own designs ? Vast is the force arrayed against the soldier of Christ, but the more he believes in the exalted power of the adversary who would “devour him,” the more he will be on guard against his assaults. Once fallen beneath the attack, when shall he rise ?

The nature of free-will has, as all know, given birth to a variety of discussions, many, perhaps, profitless—all interminable. But in spite of the arguments adduced to prove its existence—arguments wrapped round in a ponderous coil of words—I cannot understand how there can subsist such a positive quality in a being fashioned by an all-powerful and all-wise Creator. It is not enough to say that the man is not drawn in one direction or the other by any physical force, or any overwhelming mental impression. He does, in

fact, and by choice, pursue the one path or the other—but what determines the choice? Something, assuredly, that he did not give himself. It was some peculiar constitution of mind; or some misleading passion; or force of circumstances, or example, or counsel: or some other efficient cause of which the man himself was not the originator. Whether he overcame or yielded to the temptation, accepted or rejected the counsel, bent beneath or rose superior to the circumstances, the feeble or the strong will, as the case may be, was implanted in him by a power who commands the heart, and is acquainted with its issues. This view is sanctioned by Scriptural language. A man must be *drawn* to Christ. He can do nothing without the grace of God assisting him. To one is given this grace, to another it is not given. None can urge any claim by reason of merit. Can demerit plead any reasonable excuse?

There is an aspect of this question which may be looked at in connection with our present purpose. We are, it will be granted, given the choice between good and evil, in Scripture language between God and Satan.

Can we suppose that an infinitely good Being would leave the choice of so momentous a destiny to man—when, too, He foresees how he will act from the very nature He has given him—unless there be some necessity for the danger-fraught permission, however temporary that necessity be? All good and perfect gifts come from God (James i. 17). Either the gift of the power of decision in the present case is not good and perfect, or it will turn out to be so in the course of time—time perhaps involving ages.

I shall be told that many professing Christians do not believe in the doctrine which I advocate. I reply that if less than one-half of what I have already written be in conformity with the Scripture texts which I have made use of for my purpose, there must be some strange influence that “lets” the believers in those Scriptures from believing likewise that they teach distinctly the existence of an evil power, whatever his nature be, and do not merely adopt the phrases “Satan,” “devil,” “evil one,” &c., as metaphorical descriptions of simple impersonal wickedness. Any argument that should prove they did so, would result in reducing the

whole of Revelation to an allegory. Then what is the reason why many, who acknowledge the authority of the Bible, reject the personality of evil? I believe that this is very generally owing to their acceptance of Scripture being mainly inherited or conventional. They take for granted that these Scriptures are true on the whole without any critical examination of details, and without, of course, any thought of what these details include or lead to. A general acknowledgment of Christ's character and mission—that the first was irreproachable, and the second consecrated to the salvation of mankind—are for them sufficient, without any searching for the foundation of what they hold as truth, and for the inferences involved in its adoption.

How many of these superficial believers reflect on what they do believe, viz., that it required the descent, incarnation, and death of a God "to purify them from their sins." Why could not He who made them cleanse them from the evil they had contracted except at such a sacrifice? The power to create seems a greater one than the power to purify. We might hesitate at interpreting this dark history unless the elements for so

doing were supplied by the Bible. This tells us distinctly of an evil power who is to be judged and cast out—and why? To free those who are by him held in chains. Here we have at least an harmonious theory though a hard saying. Reject the first part thereof—the existence of an evil personality—and we have a stupendous fact without a cause; reject the latter part—the eventual subjection of that personality—and we have an evil without a remedy.

This spirit of taking things for granted, and consequent disbelief in an evil power, has been greatly fostered (occasionally, perhaps, caused) by the merely poetical or ludicrous ways in which the devil has been represented. The many interesting tales that have imagined him and some licentious, or ambitious, or covetous man, entering into a covenant which the human contractor seals with his blood, and thereby sells himself to the fiend to purchase the indulgence of his wish, give a colouring of unreality to the chief actor in the transaction. When a poet describes the devil's garment as having a hole behind for the tail to come through; or addresses him as "Auld Hornie," or "Auld Cloots;" or figures him

as scalding damned bodies with brimstone, till they squeel, such ludicrous images forbid all serious and impartial thought on the subject, however momentous. So, in proverbs, in valentines, in colloquial expressions, his name and appearance are introduced in a manner that represses all feeling of awe. "The devil is not so black as he is painted," means primarily that men's characters are better than their neighbours draw them, but the proverb vulgarizes by familiarizing the name and the notion of the maligned personage. "The devil's black, and so are you," is the termination of a comic valentine, and valentines have a large circulation. If A says to B, "I believe you are in love," B possibly replies "Devil a bit!" Should he, on the other hand, answer, "By God, I am not!" however reprehensible the language, it shows that, although angry, he is in earnest, while his words convey no intimation that he disbelieves in or lightly regards the Being whose name he invokes. God's wrath and condemnation are called down by a swearer blasphemously, but not jestingly. Ask a man, good and honest, perhaps, but not much given to reflection, Whether he believes in the devil,

and probably he will reply, "What! believe in Old Nick! with his hoofs, and horns, and sulphurous smell when he vanishes from a room?" He assumes the hoofs, and the horns, and the smell as facts, and on these founds his disbelief. Thus it happens that the very mention of the title "devil" calls up some notion or other that casts discredit on his existence.

Such things as these, of which I have given only a very few instances, tend to create a wider disbelief in the existence of the great enemy, than all the learned tomes that have been written on the same side of the argument. Thus it happens that a popular persuasion, originating perhaps, in a freak of the imagination, or in the constant repetition of some idea which is possible, and at the same time pleasurable, has more influence on the belief and conduct of the mass than the lucubrations of the erudite, based upon much thought, and requiring thought for their comprehension. But has it never struck such disbelievers in the "devil," so called, that if there be such a personage as the foe of God and man, the mode of representing himself just described, is what he would be especially

pleased with, and most especially encourage? God wills that men should openly ascribe all glory and honour to His person and His name. The evil one would wish that man should deny his existence—still more, ridicule the very idea—the better to subject him to his influence. God cries, "Profess faith in Me that I may save you." The devil would say (though not to be heard by his victim), "Disbelieve in me that I may compass the ruin which your belief would render more difficult." That men laugh at the devil is not, of course, a proof that there is one; but there still remains the striking coincidence of what they do, with what he would wish they should do. And further, I may remark that herein he may find a proof of the greater permanence of good—that it does not seek concealment, while the ways of evil are tortuous and underhand, as if avoiding the light which would reveal its enormity. An illustration, not an argument, but an indirect illustration, may be found in the fact that swearing and blasphemous language often relieves the mind, perhaps assists the purpose of a man in anger, or under provocation. Herein is a leading evil productive of a subordinate good.

The faith of a Christian, generally, who rejects all belief in a great evil power, as it is not one of intelligence and examination, would probably be very unstable. If he takes things—and such things!—for granted, without inquiry, and believes because others believe, or seem to do so, what security can he possess against being reasoned or laughed out of his faith, being puzzled by argument, or dispirited by ridicule? He is told that one portion of the Book which he reveres is metaphorical or allegorical, and if he be a plain person requiring plain guidance, he may be led thereby to conjecture the possibility of its being false; and if one part be false or doubtful, why not others also? and if others, why not the whole?

I may be asked, naturally, what is the bearing of my theory—(I submit my ideas simply as such)—on the case of morally good men who have had the offer of Christianity made to them, and have not accepted it. Theory, of course, here becomes more theoretical; nor is such an inquiry necessary for my immediate purpose. Take, however, the case of the good man in question, and suppose him *perfectly* good. This, doubtless, is a most

extravagant assumption, but it is not so extravagant to affirm that such a man, were he possible, would be certainly saved. He would be saved by being absolutely holy, as was Christ; for God's only purpose is to make men holy through their communicated nature; so that the evil one should not be able to claim part in them. But, supposing that the man is not altogether holy, which will be readily granted, but only partially so, wearing the livery of Heaven, though sadly worn and stained by the usage and defilement of earth, How did the man acquire this partial holiness? (holiness meaning resemblance to God, however distant in nature.) It is evident that he did not give it to himself, for if he was holy by birth, neither the matter of birth, nor the circumstances consequent on it, were his own act; or, if he cultivated holiness from a strong disposition to do so, this disposition was implanted in him by some other hand than his own. Shall we say that the matter was one of chance, the throwing of a die, as to which should come uppermost of two faces, the one white, the other black? But who tossed the die? A quality, however, exists in the man; a something which is pleasing, as

far as it goes, to God. The evil one, therefore, did not bestow it on him. It seems to follow conclusively that God Himself did. Who shall assert that He will not, some time or other, perfect His own gift? will not draw wholly under His dominion the man He has already constituted half His own? will not anticipate the boast of the power of darkness, that he has rendered the gift of God, if not fatal, at least fruitless? Who shall decide that Christ may not be revealed to such a man before, or in the very article of death, or even previous to the final judgment, and thus prevent the triumph of the great antagonist of both? It were unprofitable to inquire what degree of holiness may render such a process possible, or what amount of iniquity may be an irremovable bar across the gates of Paradise. For all practical purposes, if the froward will be froward still, let the morally good cultivate that holiness which may ripen into a perfection they wot not of, and which they may be taught hereafter to ascribe to its true source. The very angels are not holy in the sight of God—yet they stand before His throne. Man is less holy than the angels—yet God made him.

The case of heathen nations seems a less difficult one than that of the educated natives of a Christian country. If the offer of serving Christ has never been made to them, they cannot, it is needless to say, be blamed for not having accepted it. Again, the offer may, in some instances, have been made in an insufficient or injudicious manner; the nature of their prejudices may not have been adequately studied, or their inveteracy enough allowed for. Often, it may be believed, the good that exists in them or their religion, has been disregarded, if not denied, instead of being turned to account in leading them on to something better. Their errors and vices have, perhaps, been too *exclusively* insisted on, and a feeling raised inimical to success. Be these things as they may, it is granted that a man should be judged by the light he has or has had, not by that which he has never possessed. Ignorance, if not wilful, does away with responsibility. How then shall they flee to Christ for safety, who have never heard of Christ; and how shall they hear without a preacher? But the feet of those who preach the Gospel are not always beautiful. Such things have occurred as an am-

bassador of Christianity kicking an idol in presence of those who revered it, and then asking aloud why the stupid deity does not avenge the insult offered it? Supposing that one of these worshippers of wood and stone had retorted by cursing the Christians' God, would He have displayed the power of His wrath by hurling lightning at the offender? And if, as is nearly certain, He would not have done so, would it have been a just inference that He was too senseless or too powerless to take notice of the indignity? Who, in the present day, would venture on attempting to reproduce the miracle of Elijah and the priests of Baal?

Heathens, not having the law of Christ, are a law to themselves, and only to that law written in their hearts by the finger of conscience, can they be held responsible. (Rom. xi. 14, &c.) They who possess but the light of nature for guidance, or the visible works of God to preach to them, or the inferences of reason to warn, are very differently situated from the disciples of revealed religion, or from those who had it in their power to become so. The whisperings of conscience or the deductions of thought are weak against the assaults

of passion or appetite, which it requires a belief in the retribution announced by an accepted teacher and guide successfully to resist. If these Heathens, judging by the standard given them, have fallen off into debasing idolatries or abominable vices, they are so far become the children of wrath. But they, who have kept themselves pure among the impure, may be admitted into one among the many mansions of Heaven when they have, in God's good time, learnt to love the builder. We cannot believe that they were created merely to be condemned ; and who shall gauge the difference between the least worthy servant admitted into the great Father's house, and the best of those who are excluded from its precincts ?





CHAPTER VIII.



WE may excuse those who deny the truth of Christianity from believing in the existence of Christianity's implacable enemy. Yet even to them a few considerations may be appropriately addressed. What may be termed the historic argument against the being of the evil one, seems to possess very little force. To trace up the belief in a diabolic power to an Eastern nation and to a time of ignorance and superstition—though the ignorance may be questioned, and the assertion of superstition is simply assuming the point in dispute—to show that it was only gradually adopted by the earlier Jews, cannot prove the belief to be without foundation. It implies rather, that there has existed from remote times, an acknowledgment of an evil

being; and if the Jews of the Old Testament were, compared with other nations, destitute of such a belief, we must recollect that the Jews were a peculiar people, subject to specific ordinances in order to separate them from polluting contact with the kingdoms of the earth, and directed by occasional revelations of God's will in cases of doubt and difficulty. If God, then, did not think fit to reveal this fact to them, it would not come to their knowledge through independent thought or inquiry, as it might to a nation left more to its own resources. If it be said that they had no clear apprehension of a Satanic being even when more advanced as a people, it may be rejoined that, though their national life was advanced, their religious life was in its first stage, as being altogether a preparatory one for the introduction of Christianity.

In examining the accounts of the Hindoo avatars, or the incarnations of Vishnu for the destruction of some dangerously bad being, we may conclude that, in spite of many monstrous incredibilities connected with their statements, the writers credited, or at least conceived as possible, the existence of persons

so wicked as to require the descent of divinity in the flesh to extirpate them. I may here remark, summarily, on the character of the Hindoo Trimurti, that although Vishnu is emphatically the "Preserver" in the Triad, he was many times born into this world in order to destroy. Siva, on the other hand, is as emphatically the "Destroyer," though his distinguishing emblem is the "Lingam," or organ for the perpetuation of life. We have here a system interchanging the destructive and preservative powers, which seems to indicate the necessity of evil, and of a constant struggle to subdue it. One deity, whose chief office is to preserve, finds himself constrained to destroy; while another, whose attribute is that of the destroyer, sanctions the reproduction of the human species. The worship of the nominally first person of the Trinity—Brahma—has fallen greatly into desuetude, as if it was considered that the fact of a living existence was of small consequence compared with the use that might be made of it, in siding with good against the assaults of evil.

It would take up too much space to enter on an examination of the creeds of ancient

nations in reference to the opposition between a good and an evil being. It may be questioned, however, whether any old religion has ever existed without inculcating such a belief in some degree. From Egypt to Scandinavia, in Osiris and Typhon, in Loki and Balder, the same idea is shadowed forth, shadowed only perhaps, but distinct enough to indicate an opinion or a sentiment. It is very easy to remark that no one doubts the existence of both good and evil, and that all nations from all times must have recognized the fact. Superstition or imagination would be led, consequently, to deify the evil as well as the good power, and even to offer him worship. This would arise from a consideration of the importance of the phenomena claiming attention, and the difficulty of accounting for them. The two deities must be opposed in order to correspond with the action of the two principles in human affairs. All this may be true, but it explains nothing ; for there still remains the residuum of fact that these people or priests were not content with asserting the mere prevalence of good and evil in the world, but concluded that wherever there was an active agency, there

must also be an active agent. What they did do indicates a struggling for some solution of the greatest of difficulties. If the priests invented the theory, still they invented what they knew would prove acceptable to the popular mind. If it sprang from the poet's brain, all poetry, to be effective, requires a basis of probability, or, at least, of possibility. And if sacrifices were offered and reverence paid (as by the Yeridis of the present day) to the bad power, the fact proves, if it does nothing else, the acknowledgment of such a personality to whom tribute could be rendered.

The allusions to the "devil" in the Old Testament are, of course, very infrequent compared with those in the New. Why warn from danger before the preservative had been manifested? Before He (as Christians believe) came to destroy the works of that devil, it was premature to say much about their author. Morality and obedience to God were, in those old times, enforced by temporal rewards and punishments. The retributions of a future state were less distinctly enunciated. When the desired of all nations—of the classic heathen, as well as of the recalcitrant Jew—

should arise, then would be the time for asking men whether they would enter the kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness. If the Lord were God in their eyes, then let them follow Him ; but if Baal, then be *his* subjects. For temporal rewards and punishments, divinely sanctioned, was substituted the service of good or evil, with the diversities of result which the choice entailed. The Israelites were upheld as an exclusive nation for preserving an allegiance to God as far as a ceremonial confession could do so. Altogether unimportant as a nation, they existed more for others than for themselves, inasmuch as they helped to keep alive among the peoples a knowledge of the righteous King of all the earth. In the fulness of time the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of all the tribes of mankind was to prevail, and allegiance became that of the heart. Love was the badge by which to distinguish the followers of the God of love. Charity was preached as the greatest of excellences ; and this warrants a hope that the number of the redeemed will eventually be legion, else pity might be described as the chiefest of virtues. Charity, also, should not only bring down

blessings on the head of him who practises it, but on the head, likewise, of the offender who calls it forth, as enrolling him, by the very act, as a member of a peculiar and divinely constituted fraternity. He who loveth hath fulfilled the law—the law of Christianity; and it would be hard to refuse him, what he chiefly seeks for, the good of his brother.

Taking a general view of existence, evil seems to be the primary condition of all things, material and moral. The maxim of the Athenian dramatist—

ὡς ἑμφύτος μὲν πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις κακὴ.

EURIP. *Beller. Frag.*

corresponds exactly with the authoritative statement of the Bible, that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. viii. 21). In sin the human being is conceived, for even they who advocate the perfectibility of the species would not maintain that he is born perfect. His very birth—whatever may be the after-joy consequent thereon—is accompanied by physical pain and suffering. In getting knowledge we commence with ignorance, and proceed through toil and discouragement. In acquiring skill we start with inexperience, and encounter

failure. Every virtue has in it the element of evil, for it may be exaggerated into vice. All life is impregnated with the seed of decay, which, if not anterior to it, is contemporaneous with it. Our very expressions, such as "There is a compensation in all things," show that in all things there is something to be compensated. All efforts of the good to ameliorate these conditions of life are but antagonisms—the resistance to one principle of being offered by another. In this state of things we have the similitude of two contending armies. One of the two is allowed to have a commander—is the other without a leader?

If animals prey upon animals—nay, seem created for the purpose of sustaining life through death—do not men prey on men? Which would be the more difficult feat—to humanize the animality of an Australian black, or to christianize the life of a mere worldly money-making European? What place has the thought of eternity in the minds of either? If there are animals that gorge themselves with food, and then sleep till it is time to seek another meal, are they worse than the colonial shepherd, who works hard for months to en-

able him to get drunk for a fortnight? By denying Christianity, and embracing pure deism, we do not account for such anomalies and imperfections. To allow, as has been done by a well-known evangelistic writer, that it would detract from the honour of God to suppose that things were created in the condition in which they now are, is allowing a great deal, for it assumes that God did not take measures for keeping the world as good as He made it.

It is not now my purpose to examine whether the evidences for the truth of Christianity are greater (as I believe) than those which may be produced in behalf of deism; but if the former be true, we have a continual struggle to overcome evil, as also an extensive organization, and an extraordinary remedy for effecting that object. If the latter be true, there still remains the difficulty of Omnipotence being the Author of that which requires bettering. Say that in either case there exists much we cannot understand, but which would clear up all perplexities if we could. But this answer, which may be given in any doubtful matter whatever, is too vaguely general to satisfy an inquiring mind when

contemplating a world out of joint. Such an inquirer must either take refuge in a faith which shuts its eyes, and represses its thoughts, or concede the doctrine of a great evil power which Christianity, beyond question, inculcates. Does not, moreover, that doctrine tend to vindicate the honour of God, which the belief in unnecessitated evil would impugn?

The world is, indeed, out of joint, and greater than man must he be who would set it right. Except in churches and conventicles, how little does religion meet with its full and direct recognition? And the lesson preached in conventicle or church will die with the occasion, unless it be prolonged and vivified in daily life. How seldom and how languidly is it introduced into common conversation in comparison with other matters—how easily are its dictates set aside when confronted with some paramount interest! The non-Christian is debarred from comment on such a state of society unless he can show that his own actions are consistently influenced by the thoughts of another world, or even of the reprobation of posterity. All this is consonant with Christ's declaration that few find the strait gate—they lie, rather, on the road,

without caring to ask the way, lest they should not find inside the portal the delights and delicacies they love. In life's daily intercourse a man is always welcomed who is talkative and amusing, although it be known that he is deficient in the qualities that would make him acceptable with his Maker. Again, if a novel-writer were to make all the people of his tale (or even one) perfect in character, never finding themselves in difficulties from their imprudence, never exhibiting anger nor sinking into despair, nor giving way to complaints, nor revenging wrong, what would his readers think? They certainly would not finish the volume, by reason of its insipidity, as well as its giving a false view of human nature. Such a book, to be interesting, must deal in many frailties, and some vices; and even the hero and heroine must engage attention by their faults, that they may excite the sympathy of those whose nature likewise is faulty.

The exclusion of religious matters from social intercourse is, no doubt, greatly owing to the existing variety of sects and opinions. In a large and mixed company it would be impossible to speak on such subjects without

offending one or more of its members. In the matter of educating the young, how more than difficult is it to enlighten and direct the ignorant in face of the opposition of those who would rather have ignorance and idleness, and their consequences, than that their own particular dogmas and crotchets should be left in the background. And how endeavour to satisfy, or even maintain peace, among such a multitudinous and conflicting host ! Casting a rapid glance over this wide field, we see Semi-Atheism, Unitarianism, and extreme High Church, Ranters, Jumpers, and Barkers ; Baptists of different shades, and subdivisions of Methodists ; New Jerusalems, Tabernacles, and Synagogues ; Plymouth Brethren, Sandemanians, and Ritualists ; Quakers and Swedenborgians ; Roman Catholics and Plumstead Peculiars, &c. ; while in the background looms the shadowy form of Spiritism, with its apparition of dead faces and resuscitation of long-buried mortality. *Quot homines tot ecclesie !* It is probable that most of these sectaries or regulars are sincere in their professions, possible that they would not exterminate each other with the power to do so. This however does not prevent them from

disliking, instead of pitying, their opponents, and believing that salvation is confined to themselves. The nearer, too, the belief, the less likelihood is there of sympathy or toleration, for a small divergence of opinion is irritating on account of its smallness; an utter difference is allowed to excite compassion for human souls steeped in ignorance, in opposition to those who know what is the exact right and will not adhere to it.

It is very certain that if half-a-dozen very clever and eccentric men were to start up now, in London alone, and proclaim six new and attractive doctrines, they would in time secure their quota of followers. From all this we might argue that some religion, or religious profession, is a moral necessity; but if it be necessary also to find out the right creed, how shall the inquirer conduct his search, and when shall he conclude it? God confounded the speech of the workmen of Babel in order to hinder their work by the varieties of language. Who hath put it into the hearts of our modern church founders to refuse to complete the temple of Him whom they serve, by disputing about its foundation and superstructure? Truly said Christ, that He had

come to cause division, not peace, among mankind ; that is, He foresaw what would be the effect of His preaching ; an effect contrary to His doctrine and opposed to His wish. "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be *already* kindled ?"

Evil, as it exists in the world, seems, in some respects, more powerful than good. There are, perhaps, more clever bad men than clever good men—clever, that is, with reference to carrying out their purposes, if they abstain from too largely and too openly offending public opinion. The children of this world are wise in their generation. But the fact is that it is easier to do evil and succeed in our aim, than to do good and prosper in a worldly sense. A great but very common mistake is made when it is said, "If such and such a wicked man had but turned his talents to good account, how different would have been the result !" No doubt the result would have been different, but in all probability the comparative success would not have been so great ; for the talents of a bad man meet with less obstruction in their exercise. The hold of conscience on him is lax. He can seize an opportunity without

any loss of self-respect. His words are not necessarily restricted by truth, or his actions by honesty. He keeps only so far within their bounds as not to peril success by excess. If he combine judgment with unscrupulosity he may prosper, and "leave the rest of his substance to his babes." The good man is restrained from uttering a witticism which is calumnious or ill-natured ; from securing an object by means that are unfair ; from attaining to repute or station by unprincipled methods. All the world, and the world's ways, are before the one, a small portion thereof before the other. How does the infatuated pursuit of present objects limit the view solely to the end to be attained ! thus evincing the power of excluding all extraneous considerations, which, when so absolute, must be evil. Even in the passionate longing for immediate fame, how seldom does the thought enter of "What will men say of me hereafter, when I am gone ?" let alone the anticipation of a judgment to come !

Evil is often—it is useless to deny it—pleasant, more pleasant than good. Stolen joys are proverbially sweet ! When the evil is unalloyed, as for a time it may be, with fear of

consequences, it may confer unmixed, though reprehensible pleasure ; whereas good, even of the highest kind, is not unfrequently purchased by the sacrifice of something dear to us. Though we have conquered ourselves there may remain a sensation of having lost something we valued "*quod in ipsis floribus angat.*" The trail of the serpent lies over the fair field of right, though it be visible only in its effects. Who is sufficient for these things—to vindicate them, if not to explain them ? I do not think (as I have before ventured to remark) any impromptu explanation, to the purport that our limited intelligence cannot take in the whole purposes of God, either satisfying or useful. Faith may rest, and raise no question, but reason, if allowable, must judge by the indications submitted to it. Must, therefore, the entire state of things which we have reviewed, be the undivided work of an all good and great Ruler, a state wherein evil is so often made easy, and powerful, and pleasant ? Before anyone attempts to offer a solution of the difficulty, let him well consider the three following propositions.

1. Our only knowledge of moral evil is acquired from an enlightened conscience.
- 2.

God cannot do evil for its own sake. 3. God cannot do evil in order to produce good.

If there be a "prince of this world," he rules it well in accordance with his own principles. He has his rewards to bestow, physical and mental. They are, moreover, close at hand, and if they be not always high in their nature, neither is the nature of those who seek them. Yes, when we look at the meannesses and depravities of life, more, even, than at its supreme crimes; when we think of the wasteful frivolities of dress, and the importance attached to the "wherewithal we shall be clothed;" on the indecencies, and jealousies, and unfaithfulnesses of literature; on the crooked ways of political partizanship; on the mountebank vagaries of religion, so called; and the sinister dealings of commerce, we may hesitate awhile before we exclaim, "O God! how fair hast thou made this world, and the inhabitants thereof!" Before deciding the question, an inquirer might cast an eye, likewise, on the dark side of *national* character; an examination of this description, if conducted in a good spirit, and with a knowledge of his own defects, and if undertaken solely for the purpose of assisting him

to form an opinion, need not render him uncharitable in his judgment. Let him, thus, consider the condition of one nation, as conspicuous for a very general scepticism, indulged in with reference to the Creator and to his creatures, likewise; of another as the slave of superstition (of course I do not mean every individual in it), and, by consequence, ignorant and cruel; while the people of one country want several of the virtues of humanity, far more than one are lamentably deficient in a leading attribute of God, who is a God that cannot lie. Such a state of things is but a practical comment on the scriptural statement, that the heart of man is *desperately* wicked.

He who believes that we may find in savages an exhibition of true nature, must concede that a belief in an evil power is natural. For an Australian black, for instance, has faith in the existence of devils or demons, while he has no knowledge of a God. I do not infer from this that the latter belief is only an educated one; but simply, that the instinct of these and such-like aborigines is guided, by what they see and experience, to endeavour to propitiate some hurtful and

malignant spirit, while they are not frightened into worship by the harmless inactivity of a good one. They at least draw very striking conclusions as to the comparative strength and superabundance of the evil which is forced upon their notice. We need not descend to such questionable particulars as that Gød made the bloom and fragrance of the rose, and the devil its thorns. All that it is necessary to insist on, is, that there exists an universal principle of Evil, in conflict with one which is Good; the result being that if there be found nothing absolutely bad, there is nothing faultlessly perfect, or even nearly so, regarded in its nature, its tendency, or its duration.





CHAPTER IX.



S regards the arguments in my last chapter, I shall be met, doubtless, with the old reply, that our hearts and their evil passions are our own sufficient devils. To a reiterated objection a reiterated answer is necessary, otherwise silence may be mistaken for concession. It seems imperative—so runs the language of dissent—that men should be left by Providence or nature to the free exercise of their own wills ; and this being the case, they will inevitably go wrong. There is much meaning in the word “inevitably.” What is the reason of one man “going hopelessly wrong,” when his neighbour keeps more strictly to the right path ? Why, indeed, must anyone go wrong as a matter of necessity ? All men, say, are exposed to evil influences, and one man more than another is

liable to be injuriously affected by them through peculiarity of disposition, or force of circumstances. But what is ultimately meant by being "more disposed to evil?" As it stands, it is a mere statement that we observe from a man's conduct that he has this unhappy tendency; but the statement stops short with the effect and pays no attention to a cause. The evil disposition seems often born with the offender, or is, at all events, manifested very early in life; while another person, brought up with him, and, in all respects, treated and situated the same, develops a character of exceptional excellence. There is something very strange in this undoubted truth, and things that are strange invite intelligent and unbiassed criticism. Again, when we talk of "force of circumstances," "corrupting associations and companionship," &c., do we suppose that the relations of life are of haphazard occurrence and subject to no causation and no direction, when the stars of heaven are guided in their courses, and the elements of earth do as they are bid?

Let us grant that a man has a bad heart. We need not here draw distinctions between

the heart and the brain, and their comparative offices. We may assume that a person's evil passions are the result of the organization of some tangible portion of his body, in which such affections reside. One individual is moved to good, another to evil, by this material machinery; or the process is largely modified by his experience of consequences, by influence of example, by advice, by imitation, &c. But then *how* does he thus modify his natural tendencies? The organs must be again set in motion by something, and set in motion, too, in various directions, and with different degrees of strength. A complex and wonderful instrumentation! Likes and dislikes, hopes and despairs, constant changes and declinations, and renewals in disposition and action caused by the spontaneous movements of a little organized matter. Can alternation of hate and love, for instance, be effected by the elevation or depression of a lever with no hand to hold it? or regularity, and provision against ruin, be secured by a balance-wheel without a superintending intelligence?

"Combine ten brainless substances—'tis done!
Have they gained sense by merging into one?"

Some of our modern machines are marvellous imitations of real life. We see little steel arms stretching forth and performing the duty of fingers; dead metal compressing or cutting, or sorting or distributing in a thousand ways, and the whole moved by the action of a vapour, and superintended and regulated by some other piece of similar metal, only differently placed and shaped. Suppose an infant to spring at once into a man, with a man's intelligence, and to be set down before such a machine. What would be his first impression? Probably, that it was alive, like himself. Here would be one mistake. Subsequently he would ascertain that it was a mere arrangement of unintelligent matter, fashioned by beings of the same nature as his own. As he proceeded with the investigation, and went on to the fire, and the water, and the steam, would he conclude that these were the moving powers, and that there was nothing beyond and above them? If so, he would make a second mistake. Possibly, he might discover that the whole process depended upon some occult power of nature, such as gravitation, attraction, repulsion of particles, &c. What, then, would be his con-

clusion as to these powers? That they were independent intelligences, acting with wonderful agreement towards one end, and never counteracting each other. Would he have made a third mistake here? Or perhaps he might say, "I perceive, though I cannot see, some efficient causes at work, but whence they spring, or what impresses their action upon matter, so that it must obey, I cannot tell. The operation of that machine produces results like itself in substance. The operations of my mind, if it be a mere material organization, give birth to results different from itself in character, and greatly higher in degree. I would seek for a cause in this, as I would for a cause of gravitation, and other powers of which I have been told." In this reasoning has the man made a further mistake so that our doings and propensities which are material in their consequences, are material also in their origin?

Grant that mind, soul, heart, &c., are the results of organization—I mean the affections and qualities connected with these material instruments—but then, as in the case of the machine, we might ask, "Who is the author of the organization?" The collocation of

particles of matter produces an effect absolutely foreign to anything in their nature. I have a mind to do something. A friend dissuades me from doing it. In his advice and my change of resolve, do we see nothing more than a motion and counter-motion of unintelligent atoms? It can scarcely be supposed that these atoms have a true spontaneous movement. At the most, their inter-arrangement may be such as to assist or impede the action of a spiritual influence, in the same manner as a severe physical injury may hinder, in whole or in part, the reception of any proposition by the individual suffering from it. Again, a friend's advice is good—I don't take it; or it is bad—and I do, or do not take it. Here, if the collocation of atoms be suited, or unsuited to the incoming of the spiritual influence from without, why must there not exist within me also a similar influence adverse to, or unfavourable for, the reception of the counsel offered? In addition to this, we may consider that the brain is composed of many parts. How could the affections of that organ be managed so that a man would experience one or two harmonious emotions only, instead of a vast variety of

contradictory and confusing ones at the same instant without some supreme arbiter, distinct from that which it superintended, to harmonize impressions, and produce a result which is not chaos? How, without some such director, could our notions of individuality be prevented from being multiplied by the great complexity of sensations, or perceptions, so as to make us fancy ourselves more than one single person? But if there be an arbiter, as above suggested, and the tendency of his, or its, arbitration be evil, then the arbiter is evil also.

But it is not necessary at present to pursue such speculations as these. It is enough to remark that they who refer all moral evil to our own natural corruption may be fairly asked, "Why is the corruption natural?" Why is it to be *expected* that the Supreme good Power would create a number of sentient beings, whose nature He foreknew—and is not foreknowledge causation with Him?—would be corrupted; and then (if Christianity be true) would send His co-equal to remedy the evil which, in the creation of these beings, He had himself allowed of? To make this question more important, I will repeat—for

the matter cannot be too much insisted on—another one. In addition to the bad thoughts which all will acknowledge that they occasionally indulge in, what man can affirm that he has never had others from which he has recoiled with a shudder, as if they were forced on him in antagonism to his will and his nature, and which, if for a time expelled from the mind, return with malevolent perseverance to the attack? Is it possible to give any explanation of this phenomenon, and, if possible, what is it?

However difficult it may be to prove the existence of a great evil power, it is at least equally difficult to disprove it. To call the idea unphilosophical is to beg the question, and is as illogical as the syllogism of a noble author, before quoted, who argues—"1. There is no such being as the devil. 2. The Evangelists believed in him. 3. Therefore they believed in what is false." Assume the major premiss, and the matter is satisfactorily settled. The idea can only be unphilosophical if pantheism be true, and with that would come a somewhat hazy distinction between right and wrong. It is as yet premature to assert that the Deity is of one and

the same substance with the universe He rules. The case may be different when the time arrives for the fulfilment of the Scriptural statement that God will be "all in all." St. John lays down the position that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." We may conceive, therefore, of a pantheistic millennium, when everything living shall dwell in love, and be at unity with the divine nature. But we have few signs of such a period at present.

As I have before partly stated, there are more arguments, as well as intuitions, for the existence of a "devil," than against it. Not long ago I heard a preacher declare from the pulpit that "we are all born into the world in enmity with God;" a statement which preachers in general would corroborate: for does not Scripture assert that we are conceived in sin? Yet if none or nothing but God has anything to do with our birth and its results, the doctrine is an astounding one, for He must, then, implant the enmity which He charges against man as a crime. As an instance of physical evil (and its accompaniments) take an earthquake—that of Lisbon

for example—and consider the thousands of unoffending souls swept from life—a life which, if they did not illustrate it, they did not perhaps disgrace ; and thousands of offenders hurried off to judgment without a moment vouchsafed for repentance. As a matter of moral evil, cast a glance on the French revolution. Doubtless, it was the retributive result of a most polluted state of society ; but, then, what indiscriminate brutality was mixed up with it, and what must have been the diseased state of society which called for such a remedy ? It does not seem possible, when a great evil is to be cured or punished, to effect this except through the instrumentality of another great evil. In some cases the cure may be worse than the complaint.

Who can deny that it is as wrong as it is futile to arraign the proceedings of God if they are clearly seen to be undividedly His ? But He has given us the faculty of thinking, and what is the use of a gift that is not used ? Availing ourselves of it, therefore, we conclude that as there is a time for all earthly things, so also there is one for carrying out the counsels of God. Christ Himself an-

nounced that His time for a certain action had not then come. The appearance of an angel at the Sepulchre struck terror into all on the spot. The descent of a few such angels would have converted the world in a very short space of time. Christ when choosing some of His disciples, influenced them, without argument or entreaty, to follow Him *at once*. Had He done this with regard to many millions, He would have met with no opposition to His teaching. But He chose, instead, a very few to convert the very many ; and, as His death was necessary, the bad were left to inflict it. In all this we have a system and a method, and means involving time, and enforcing delay. Beyond question God's ways are best—and these are His ways, but they are not the ways of instantaneous action. In many cases, moreover, they are “past finding out ;” and, being so, the fact must arise from the vast complication of interests, and intervals of extended duration, involved in them.

A belief in an evil power would, as I have endeavoured to show, be accompanied by certain advantages. In this matter men seem sometimes to halt between two opinions.

They acknowledge the authority of the New Testament, and reject its teaching. They assent to the liturgy of a Church which prays to be delivered from the wiles of Satan and exclaims, "Thou only fightest for us, O Lord!" Fightest against what? Clearly against something which we are not strong enough to encounter ourselves. They approve of the hymns which exhort us to "lift up the banner," and encourage the Christian soldier to go onward in the battle. These and many such expressions indicate a struggle and a strife. Is the battle to be waged with ourselves merely? Obviously a very weak suggestion. Is God to fight with us against ourselves—to aid us in our endeavour to conquer evil? But evil is an instrument only in the hands of intelligence. The tares were planted by some *person*. It was an enemy that planted them; an enemy of good, and therefore of God. What is the end of the whole matter?

At the disciples' last interview with Christ, as recorded in the end of Matthew, He tells them that all power is given Him in Heaven and earth, and that He is with them always unto the end of the world. How can we

interpret these words—"All power" and "always with them"—yet divisions and disputes occurred in the Christian community not long after His ascension? Consider the sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas, the conduct of Peter, as reproved to his face by Paul; the selfish love-feasts and immoralities of the Corinthians, etc., and then can "all power" mean anything else than that His immediate followers would be preserved from eventual fall, though continually affronting their profession? He was with them to aid them in a never-ceasing contest with temptation, whoever was the tempter.

Among the advantages of the doctrine I have attempted to support would be its partial solution of several difficult questions; such as the temporary apparent failure of justice according to our human notions, and which, when it sometimes occurs is poorly accounted for by an assertion that God is wiser than ourselves. Would a man commit a crime, and assume the silence of a wise God as justifying it? Again, we may consider the want of clearness in some revealed matters, giving such food for acrimonious dispute, and injurious action; the dimness of view regard-

ing a future world, and the frequent living in this as if there were not one; the great calamities of life wherein no compensating good is perceivable; and the good which is so often debilitated by its opposite.

The doctrine, too, is worthy of consideration in connection with certain opinions lately enunciated by an author of acknowledged ability, who writes:—"To say that the author of such a world is a purely benevolent being, is, to my mind, to say something which is not true, or, at the very least something which is highly improbable in itself," &c. He goes on to state that he does not believe in God's being disposed to promote the happiness of his creatures *absolutely*. For "absolutely" I should substitute "unconditionally," the condition exacted being one of allegiance. To suppose God to be almighty, and not at the same time purely benevolent, is more derogatory to His character, than to imagine that His omnipotence is exposed to a temporary limit, which, when removed, will permit His love to shine forth in its absolute perfection.

There are some excellent theories in existence of the nature of Heaven, and of what the probable life there would consist; but

equal consideration does not seem to have been given to the question why men should be born into this world as a preparation for another, and subject to pains and struggles, and trials and failures. Angels, we may think, were placed in Heaven without having undergone any preceding process—a process, moreover, which, in the case of mankind, is often ineffectual, not from any defect inherent in itself, but owing to the opposition which encounters it, and which defeats its object. I would say, then, to those who are engaged in the battle of life, and may feel irresolute, “Reflect, that by sinning, you sell yourselves to God’s opposite.” The more distinctly you apprehend this opposition as having its source in a personal existence, the more clear and effective will be the impression you receive. What advantage, on the other hand, would follow on the rejection of a personality of evil? Let them who have done so say whether their unbelief has, in any sense, conducted them toward the adoption of a purer and a firmer faith, or the living of a better life.

There is supposed to be in unbelief—whether of God or devil—a certain largeness of mind, a freedom from intellectual prejudice.

Men often pin their faith, or unfaith, on the opinions of some celebrated savant, whose learned disquisitions are beyond *their* learning, and above their comprehension. Knowing more than they do in what they wish to be thought to understand, he becomes to them an authority in matters which they are capable of understanding. Mr. So-and-so, professor of some science, whose name even they are unable to interpret, rejects revelation (perhaps religion in general); therefore it must be a delusion. To be *supposed* to comprehend what the eminent professor teaches on other subjects is more creditable to their acumen, than to assent to intelligible doctrines of right and wrong, encouraged and enforced by rewards and punishments. Thus they fancy that between them and their master there grows up an intellectual fellowship.

But professors themselves, however learned and unprejudiced, prefer good to evil. There are many things in the moral world which they would like to rectify, for, in their own line of action they have felt the evils of sin in the shape of jealousy, and strife, and injustice. They would not possibly be mortified if good and happiness were continued in a

world beyond. But they require proof of such a world, with its distribution of prizes and penalties ; then they must be content, in seeking it, to acknowledge that there are other classes of intellects than their own, and other subjects of interest besides those they cultivate. It seems impossible, as an instance, for the same man to scale the topmost heights of Parnassus and of science. At least there have been no examples of the fact. An un-devout astronomer need not be mad ; but he may suffer from a contracted vision, and venture on imperfect deductions. If he conceive that the regularity of the planetary motions is the effect of chance, then he exalts Chance into a deity : for chance, as ordinarily understood, and regularity, are opposed in their simplest conceptions. Look again at the nature of the evidence in his pursuit with which he has to deal. It is primarily founded upon eyesight, and subsequently utilized by the aid of pure mathematics. Here ocular observation and demonstrative truth are the bases of his conclusions—a very different process, and requiring a very different turn of mind, from the power to analyse human testimony, to deduce principles from events, and

to decide upon the probabilities of history. His mind, great in another line, may be limited in this; and to make progress—at least discoveries—in his own science, requires the sacrifice of all his time and the absorption of all his thoughts.

A man of science may reflect how many things connected with his own investigations he has disbelieved, until more careful inquiry, by himself or others, has proved them true; how many possible truths there are which his scientific brotherhood would not accept if enuntiated; while, if he affirmed them to be probable, the assertion would be received with mingled distrust and contempt.

If the savant denies a God, we need not ask him to believe in a devil; but we may fairly inquire what amount of time and unprejudiced thought he has given to the subject of religion in any shape.

“Hard is the task to make a child of doubt
Believe on reasons, who dissents without.”

This matter of dissent is occasionally one on which suspicion is justifiable. When Lalande, for instance, writes—“*Je me félicite plus de mes progrès en athéisme, que de ceux que je puis avoir faits en astronomie,*” we might

ask the reason of his *congratulating* himself on the occasion. When, generally, we are pleased with having made progress in any matter, such pleasure indicates that we commenced the pursuit with a wish to succeed therein. So did Lalande *start* with a desire to believe in atheism, and then feel a corresponding satisfaction as he advanced towards conviction? What is such a conviction worth, when attained by a process which he would not have thought of adopting in his astronomical investigations?

However, if the learned sceptic will be a sceptic still, he may, though apparently hating the notion of a God, yet love his neighbour, and so draw nearer to that kingdom, of which, for the present, he declines to be a subject. If, indeed, there be such a thing as a battle between right and wrong, then every man that loveth with heart and soul and mind, puts a weapon into the hand of God to wound the head of iniquity. What, then, would be the effect if the principle became as universal as it is already widely diffused? For

“ Search the universe, from where
Round the central sun afar
Neptune drives his dusky car,

To the atom-speck in space,
Rushing to that sun's embrace ;
Round, below, amid, above,
Where there's Life there must be Love !”

Love truly smoothes, if anything can, the rugged things of earth, as well as rules the harmonies of heaven. In the prediluvian days eight persons only were saved from the avenging waters. May we not hope that a larger proportionate number would be rescued now from the retributive deluge, whatever their creed, provided it were founded on the rock of faith, hope, and charity ?

Reader, dost thou demand my confession of faith ? Hear it. “Though there be lords many, and gods many, the Lord is my God, and Christ is His Interpreter.” Thou, whether Christian or not, canst do battle with evil. But if thou be a Christian, think that thou are enlisted on a side, and must obey orders.

“Soldier of Christ ! Why idle stand ?

Go, seek thy armour now.

I see no spear-shaft in thy hand,

No helmet on thy brow.”

“I wear a helmet hidden from view,

Who wears will surely win.

I grasp a spear which pierces through

The harden'd breast of sin.”

“ Soldier ! Thou art not on thy guard.

What are thy weapons like ?

Thou hast no brazen shield to ward,

No tempered sword to strike.”

“ The weapons lent me by my Lord,

Heav’n-forged, are those I wield :

His Word in me becomes a sword,

My trust in Him a shield.”

“ Thou hast no breast-plate for the war,

Thy feet are naked too ;

I scent the battle from afar,

Fight ? Fly ? What wilt thou do ? ”

“ Truth is my breast-plate, firmly set,

God’s truth, and human right ;

My feet are shod with peace, and yet

I will abide the fight.”

“ Where is the flag thou bear’st ? Reveal

His title whose thou art.

The foe is on thee ! dost thou feel

No searchings of thy heart ? ”

“ I see my banner in the sky,

Where Christ my leader lives ;

My courage comes from Him, and I

Will use the gift He gives.”

“ Soldier ! Where is thy foeman ? Where

The object of thy fear ?

I look around to earth and air,

And see no danger near.”

“ God’s foe is mine. This e’er hath been

The danger I still find—

Lest, while my enemy’s unseen,

I also should be blind.”

“The soldier, weary with the day
That doth no rest allow,
Drinks of the brooklet by the way,
Rejoicing ; what dost thou ?”

“There is a strength that lifts me up,
It floweth from above ;
And when my spirit droops, the cup
Of which I drink is Love.”

“With arms like thine no victory
Is won by man o’er men ;
But when thou shalt have laid them by,
What wilt thou hope for then ?”

“To hear the King cry, ‘Blest is he
On whom My face doth shine ;
As thou hast borne the war for Me,
Now shall My peace be thine.’”

THE END.

